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Contents

June 22, 2009 • Volume 14, Number 38

2 Scrapbook . . . . . *The Enemies of Gen. Jones*

4 Casual . . . . . *Richard Starr remembers Omar Bongo*

5 Correspondence . . . . . *Marriage Again*

7 Editorial . . . . . *Dare to Defeat ObamaCare*

Articles

9 Nearer, My God *The deity in the White House* . . . . . BY NOEMIE EMERY

11 At Least He Isn't a Traitor to His Class *The all-too-familiar story of W. Kendall Myers* . . . . . BY SAM SCHULMAN

13 You Have the Right to Remain Silent . . . *Mirandizing terrorists* . . . . . BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

15 An Anti-Business President *Profit is without honor in Obama's view* . . . . . BY FRED BARNES

16 Paying for the Piper *A very British scandal wreaks havoc in the mother of parliaments* . . . . . BY ANDREW STUTTAFORD

18 What Abortionist Killers Believe *The consequences of a fringe theology* . . . . . BY JON A. SHIELDS

20 Now Comes the Hard Part *Hezbollah loses in Lebanon* . . . . . BY DAVID SCHENKER

Cover: Thomas Fluharty

Features

22 The Exploding Carbon Tax . . . . . BY MARTIN FELDSTEIN
It's equivalent to raising a family of four's income tax by 50 percent

25 The 'Dependence on Foreign Oil' Canard . . . . BY JEFF BERGNER
The worst justification yet for Obama's energy plan

Books & Arts

28 The Fawn Patrol *How embarrassing can the 'coverage' get?* . . . . . BY ANDREW FERGUSON

30 Consequential Ideas *Exploring the subtle dangers of 'soft despotism' in democracies* . . . . . BY HARVEY MANSFIELD

32 It's Probably True *What are the chances of great minds thinking alike?* . . . . . BY DAVID GUASPARI

34 Life, Interrupted *A lyrical voice from the ruins of the Balkans* . . . . . BY SAM MUNSON

36 Food, Glorious Food *A taste of the Federal Writers Project, without additives* . . . . . BY ABBY WISSE SCHACHTER

38 Comedy Tonight? *From Allen to Paar to Carson to Leno to just another show* . . . . . BY ELI LEHRER

39 Formula 123 *Gritty subways, cowering hostages, and Denzel Washington, too* . . . . . BY JOHN PODHORETZ

40 Parody . . . . . *Visit Uighurific Bermuda!*

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The Enemies of Gen. Jones

The last time The Scrapbook checked in with Obama administration National Security Adviser Jim Jones it was less than a month after the inauguration and the retired Marine general had already found himself at the center of a minor fiasco. After offering the job of U.S. ambassador to Iraq to Anthony Zinni, Jones was overruled and the offer revoked. Jones offered Zinni a consolation prize, and Zinni told the press he could "stick that with whatever other offers" he might have. And that was pretty much the high-point of Jones's tenure at the NSC.

Around the same time, Jones gave an interview to the *Washington Post* in which he "made it clear that he will . . . be the primary conduit of national security advice to Obama, eliminating the 'back channels' that at times in the Bush administration allowed Cabinet secretaries and the vice president's office to unilaterally influence and make policy out of view of the others."

But two months later, it was clear that any back channels Jones had eliminated were fast being reestablished. "The system is full of workarounds to cut Jones out of the loop and keep the business of government running," one administration official told *Politico*.

What started as a trickle of bad news—*Time*'s Joe Klein conceded "some concern" within the administration about Jones and *Foreign Policy*'s Laura Rozen reported that several sources had "described Jones as having a problematic tenure at the NSC"—soon became a flood.

The administration tried to prop Jones up by sitting him down with both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Jones reassured the *Post*, "I'm not only an outsider, but I'm a 20-years-older-than-anybody-around outsider." The one thing the politically tone-deaf Jones took credit for was convincing the president to punt on repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell—the policy that keeps uncloseted gay men and women from serving in the military. Jones went "to see him personally on it." And when the *Times* asked Jones about "sniping from staff members that he went biking at lunchtime and left work early," he seemed "about to crush his coffee cup," before he responded directly to those staffers—presumably 20-years-younger-than-Jones insiders—who were staying past 7 P.M.: "Congratulations. To me, that means you're not organized."

Just this week, liberal blogger Steve Clemons claimed a fresh push by Jones's "enemies" inside the administration. "Knives getting longer" is how one source described to him the latest effort to throw Jones under the bus. The same day, former *Washington Post* reporter Tom Ricks said he was "picking up the vibe that some powerful people want to have Defense Secretary Robert Gates . . . replace retired Marine Gen. Jones." And Fox News reported "One NSC staff member claimed that Jones is so forgetful that at times he appears to have Alzheimer's disease." Sounds like some of Jones's coworkers are better organized than he thought. ♦

'Affirmative Action Baby'

The *New York Times* reported last week that among the documents Judge Sonia Sotomayor submitted to the Senate in advance of hearings over her nomination to the Supreme Court was a videotape from the early 1990s in which she describes herself as an "affirmative action baby":

> The clips include lengthy remarks about her experiences as an "affirmative action baby" whose lower test scores were overlooked by admissions committees at Princeton University and Yale Law School because, she said, she is Hispanic and had grown up in poor circumstances.

Our colleague Michael Goldfarb at *weeklystandard.com* pointed out the liberal hypocrisy here:

> As a matter of official policy, these schools lowered the bar for Sotomayor, so why do her supporters—who tend also to be supporters of affirmative action—not celebrate her nomination, and her career, as proof that affirmative action works? The former president of Princeton University specifically denied that Sotomayor had needed the help of affirmative action in order to gain admission to Princeton. Conservatives who suggested otherwise were called racists or worse.

We're waiting for the liberal apologies, now that they know the truth. ♦

Buy These Books

Hear ye! Hear ye! Not one but two new publications by friends of The Scrapbook are now available from booksellers everywhere (and online):

Kimberly Kagan's *The Surge: A Military History* (Encounter Books) builds on work she published in The Weekly Standard and elsewhere. Everyone who's anyone in D.C. seems to have decided to forget that they opposed the surge in Iraq in 2007 and deprecated its early successes. Or they've decided to pretend that there was no surge, or that it was destined to succeed, and was therefore no big deal.

Kagan explains what happened, why it was a big deal, and what lessons of generalship, military strategy, and the

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importance of the intelligent application of military power we can learn from it. President Obama should read the book, but probably won't. The rest of us should read it, enjoy it, and profit from so doing.

Our other friend is a posthumous one: Winston Churchill. His terrific collection of essays, published in 1932, on themes ranging from art to politics to war to Moses, has been reissued by ISI Books under the superb editorship of James W. Muller. Muller's introduction and footnotes explain what you need to know to fully appreciate Churchill, and Churchill's spectacular essays explain what you need to know to appreciate life. If you've never read *Thoughts and Adventures*, you're in for a treat. If you've read it before, the essays are well worth a rereading—or giving as a gift to someone who hasn't yet had the pleasure. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'What a relief to have an urbane, cultivated, curious president who's out and about, engaged in the world. Not dangerously detached, as W. was, or darkly stewing . . . " ("Can the One Have Fun?" Maureen Dowd, *New York Times*, June 10). ♦

The 'Responsible Neo-Nazi Community' Had No Comment

'John de Nugent, an acquaintance who describes himself as a white separatist, . . . called [James W.] von Brunn [the Holocaust Museum shooter] a genius, but described the shooting as the act of 'a loner and a hothead.' 'The responsible white separatist community condemns this,' he said. 'It makes us look bad.'"

("A Suspect's Long History of Hate, and Signs of Strain," *Washington Post*, June 11). ♦

There Will Always Be an England

'Two dukes went wrong in a piece about the political power of walking. It was not the 8th Duke of Devonshire, but the 9th, who insisted on prosecuting ramblers who staged the 'Kinder Scout trespass' on his land in 1932. . . . Nor was it the 10th Duke of Norfolk who later apologised over the resulting jailings, but the 11th . . ." (a correction in the *Guardian*, June 10). ♦

Help Wanted

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Casual

Little Big Man

'Africa's longest-serving leader," as Reuters put it, died last week. President Omar Bongo of Gabon, the man in question, was being treated for cancer at a clinic in Spain when his "four decades of tight control over the central African oil-producing nation" (Reuters again) came to an end.

"Longest-serving" is probably not the right adjective. To tightly control any country for four decades, much less an OPEC outpost in central Africa, a ruler is more apt to be served by his people than to be of service to them. And the spectacle, not infrequent, of a kleptocrat winding down his days in a foreign hospital raises the uncomfortable question of why none of the billions of petrodollars that passed through his hands endowed a medical facility in his own country capable of—well, being of service to him.

But I'm being slightly ungenerous to the late deceased sovereign. He had a magnificent name, for one thing. Bongo is one vowel shy of being a perfect anagram for Gabon, and thus neatly symbolic of the blurred lines between the state and the head of state. And for another thing, I owe him a debt of gratitude for the memorable afternoon in 1987 on which I've been dining out ever since.

Bongo came to see President Reagan and spend a week in Washington in early August 1987. The only problem was, no one wanted to see Bongo. So Selwa "Lucky" Roosevelt, chief of protocol at the State Department, prevailed on her friend Arnaud de Borchgrave, then editor in chief of the *Washington Times*, to interview the visiting big man.

Knowing that I had a bit of schoolboy French, Arnaud gathered me out of the newsroom to be his wingman. We cabbed down to the old Hotel Washington, where Bongo and his retinue had reserved a floor.

Upon being ushered into his suite, the first thing I noticed was that the big man was actually a big little man—he was wearing the tallest platform shoes I've ever seen, maybe five or six inches, and was still diminutive. The

HAL MAYFORTH

second thing I noticed was that the air conditioning seemed to be on the fritz. This turned out not to be the fault of the hotel, which wasn't the swankiest address in the nation's capital, but did boast functioning AC. But it couldn't keep up with the klieg lights set up by Gabon state TV in the adjoining room, in which a makeshift stage had been prepared to showcase the proceedings.

Under the lights were risers of different heights, not unlike the Olympics medal platforms. Unsurprisingly, Bongo, seated in the middle on the highest platform, was the gold medal winner; Arnaud to his right, was the silver medalist; and I, on a short chair on the shortest platform, was the bronze. On camera, Bongo must have towered over me by at least a couple of feet, even though when we had shaken hands a moment before he had been gazing straight ahead at a spot two or three inches below the knot of my tie. Thanks to the lights, we were all sweating like athletes.

Arnaud, who was born in Belgium and thus a perfectly fluent French speaker, offered a flowery welcome to President Bongo and asked an anodyne question about his meeting with President Reagan. Bongo ignored the question and launched into a ten minute prepared speech on the evils of apartheid, the shame of America for propping up the South African government with a policy of "constructive engagement," and a probably fictitious account of how he had lectured President Reagan at length on all of the above. Arnaud tried a second question, also anodyne. Bongo repeated his sermon, at length, and we all sweated some more.

At that point, Arnaud, a bit red in the face, made reference to President Bongo's Muslim faith, asked about the progress of Islam in Gabon (where it's a distinct minority), and inquired when Bongo, as a pious believer, was going to make his pilgrimage to Mecca. Whereupon Bongo, again ignoring the question, shut down the cameras, and had his minions see us out.

I was a bit mystified. Arnaud was as miffed as I was at having been turned into a stage prop for Bongo's propaganda footage—after doing him the favor of feigning interest in his Washington trip. Albert-Bernard Bongo, Arnaud explained, had converted in 1973, becoming El Hadj Omar Bongo, upon receipt of a seven-figure emolument from fellow OPEC leader Muammar Qaddafi. Bongo was therefore sensitive to questions about his faith. And after what he had put us through, it was only fair to make him sweat a little bit more.

Richard Starr

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Marriage Controversy

Sam Schulman ("The Worst Thing About Gay Marriage: It Isn't Going to Work," June 1) makes the point that gay marriage has little precedent. To this should be added that divorce is also rare in Western history. A great conservative of the last century, writing when divorce was scarcely available, said of the alternative "reign of the cowards": "Emphatically," wrote G.K. Chesterton, "it will not work." Chesterton's "A Defence of Rash Vows" is worth quoting at length. To it, nothing need be added.

> It is the nature of love to bind itself, and the institution of marriage merely paid the average man the compliment of taking him at his word. Modern sages offer to the lover, with an ill-favoured grin, the largest liberties and the fullest irresponsibility; but they do not respect him as the old Church respected him; they do not write his oath upon the heavens, as the record of his highest moment. They give him every liberty except the liberty to sell his liberty, which is the only one that he wants. . . . Emphatically it will not work. There are thrilling moments, doubtless, for the spectator, the amateur, and the aesthete; but there is one thrill that is known only to the soldier who fights for his own flag, to the ascetic who starves himself for his own illumination, to the lover who makes finally his own choice. . . . All around us is the city of small sins, abounding in backways and retreats, but surely, sooner or later, the towering flame will rise from the harbour announcing that the reign of the cowards is over and a man is burning his ships.

Benjamin Letzler
Cambridge, Mass.

As a subscriber to The Weekly Standard, I have never been more disgusted than I was after reading Sam Schulman's "analysis" of marriage. I was shocked at Schulman's backward views on romantic love, human sexuality, gender relations, and legal marriage. Schulman's article is doing nothing short of lauding a primitive, sexist, condescending form of marriage that largely (and happily!) stopped existing in modern Western societies. He (apparently) wants us to return to marriages where the woman was "controlled"; where her sexuality was "protected"; where the very purpose of the marriage was not the institutionalization of loving and harmonious relations between two committed partners (what he dismissively calls "romantic" marriage), but rather the subordination of one partner's freedom and purpose to the other's.

Gene Gerzhoy
Owings Mills, Md.

Sam Schulman's paean to the virtues of marriage was well wrought, yet he failed to acknowledge those who seem to be doing most to harm this august institution and thus threaten the kinship virtues he extols. I remind Mr. Schulman that heterosexuals seem to divorce a lot (about half of all marriages, lest we forget) and so this group is clearly doing bad, bad things to all of us. Why does he let these folks off the hook? Why does he fear that some gays who choose to get married can possibly do more damage to the institution and its kinship bonds, especially given the relative numbers of those involved (gays are perhaps 5-10 percent of the population)? On what basis do heterosexuals who divorce (practically most of them, including you and me) have the right to deny the civil virtues of marriage to gays? Don't you think they have the right to become as miserable in marriage as anybody else?

If marriage is the best thing under God's blue skies, then perhaps there should be more tradition imposed on it and divorce should be impossible. Why isn't Schulman proposing that? Is it because getting remarried after a divorce somehow wipes the slate of sin and degradation to society clean? Is it because Schulman wants what he wants when he wants it, regardless of the consequences to society? Sounds like a very libertine point of view. How convenient.

Remember what Mark Twain said about quitting smoking (approx.): "Easiest thing in the world; I've done it dozens of times." Denigrating marriage through multiple divorces and numerous remarriages sounds about the same to me. Yet Schulman seems to want to make the case that gay marriage will cause more harm to society than his own behavior and that of his group.

Ted DiSante
Tucson, Ariz.

Many thanks to Sam Schulman for his June 1 article on gay marriage and kinship structure. My question goes to the periphery, not the core, of his argument.

As Schulman points out, the kinship structure exists largely to protect women; lest this seem too paternalistic, he invokes one of the ultimate alternatives—"the fate of child-prostitutes in brothels around the world."

But there are male child-prostitutes too, and boys get trafficked as well, no? Male-on-male desire, as well as male-on-female, needs to be channeled, it would seem. "Conservative" gay marriage advocates say their agenda addresses precisely this problem. Schulman's article amply contests this claim. But what does—or at any rate might have been thought to—address the problem of unchanneled male-on-male desire?

Schulman expresses, in passing, great dislike for traditional anti-sodomy laws, and believes he can afford this because gay sexuality is completely irrelevant to the kinship system. But is it, if it too can lead to the aberrations that the kinship system exists to prevent?

The conclusion (I suggest) is not a new wave of enactment and enforcement of anti-sodomy laws (testing the limits of *Lawrence* v. *Texas*), but rather, and only, a better understanding of why they were enacted. Perhaps those legislatures—like the ones that enacted

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our still-extant anti-incest laws (of which, I take it, Schulman does not disapprove) —were merely, and rationally, trying to protect the kinship system, with all its benefits that Schulman has so perceptively described.

David M. Wagner
Regent Univ. School of Law
Virginia Beach, Va.

Sam Schulman Responds: The letters here are typical of hundreds of other comments I received, and are disturbing not because they disagree with me or, like Mr. Gerzhoy, blame me for saying something I do not say—but because of their naïve confidence in progress and the goodness of the human heart that Mr. Gerzhoy expresses most perfectly.

For him, the much grimmer versions of marriage that have always existed and exist widely in today's world outside Owings Mills have simply "stopped existing in modern Western societies." Mr. Gerzhoy is wrong about my views of modern, sexually equal marriage—I think it is splendid and far to be preferred over all other kinds. But the ability of an American woman today to dispose of her own sexuality as she wishes and live independently in physical security before marriage didn't just "start existing" because it was a good idea—but is the result of a long struggle in which not only feminists, but theologians, politicians, and soldiers played a role. Progress for women can be reversed, as any woman (or gay man) in Tehran or Cairo or Malmö, Sweden, can testify.

While Mr. Gerzhoy thinks that romantic marriage is invulnerable and the end of history, Messrs DiSante and Letzler idealize marriage in another way: They think that marriage is so fragile that the very existence of divorce delegitimizes it and undermines its utility and moral force.

These idealizing views of marriage bode ill for those who, like me, believe that marriage must survive not merely as a right, but as a custom. Marriage and divorce exist precisely because humans are imperfect and unreliable and cannot be trusted to arrange matters between men and women on an ad hoc basis. The idealists deny this—and so do those who believe that legalizing gay marriage will bring about a transformation in the lives and loves of gay people. My view of the primordial and universal reason for marriage—that with all its flaws, it exists ultimately in order to protect women's sexuality from excessive male exploitation and has no meaning outside the kinship system in which it exists—suggests that gay people will be disappointed in how little marriage reduced to a right will change their lives. Because they are no different from men and women who love, same-sex lovers will find that gay marriage will "fail"—in the sense that it will cease to be interesting, relevant, or make a difference in the natural history of relationships. This failure, I predict—not of gay relationships but of gay marriage as necessary or meaningful to gay relationships—will bring marriage itself into despite and disrepute. And for women unlucky enough to be attracted to men, the loss of marriage's prestige will have severe consequences. For men attracted to women, the ability to make use of women without having to submit to marriage will be a bonanza of pleasure and destruction. Except that it will lead to the destruction of the kinship system, and therefore of humanity itself, it might be said that I have no serious objection to gay marriage.

A few words on divorce. Mr. Letzler couldn't be more wrong about its history. Divorce is not rare, but has almost always been provided for in legal and religious systems. What is rare—a brief, noble experiment—is the Christian idea of marriage that is indissoluble unto death. For the very first time in human culture, as far as I am aware, Jesus of Nazareth proclaimed this view of marriage to an audience of no-doubt flabbergasted rabbis (Mark 10). But the no-divorce-marriage, proclaimed by Jesus, instituted and codified by St. Paul, elaborated upon by the early Church Fathers, never got much of a chance in history. In its first homeland in Syria, Asia Minor, Egypt, and North Africa, it lasted only a few centuries before being brought to an end by the divorce-friendly Muslims. Equally divorce-friendly Protestant reformers brought it to an end in Northern and Western Europe, and an extinguishing party consisting of Robespierre, Napoleon, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Ibsen, and George Bernard Shaw pretty much did away with it everywhere else—and made divorce available to the masses, not just the classes.

But even Jesus, who tried to ban divorce, had a more realistic view why it exists than than Messrs. Letzler, DiSante, and G.K. Chesterton. He told the rabbis that Moses made divorce a part of Jewish law because of the imperfection of human nature. "For the hardness of your heart he wrote you this precept." Divorce, like marriage itself, with its history of disagreeable rules, regulations and prohibitions, exists precisely because human beings cannot be trusted to treat one another well. Of course people divorce, as they marry, unwisely or for frivolous reasons. But the frequency of divorce no more invalidates the necessity of marriage than death invalidates the scientific claims of modern oncology or the existence of homosexual love harms or threatens heterosexual love.

Prof. Wagner is certainly right that male child prostitution and male-on-male rape is a big problem, and certainly until the late nineteenth century in the West, male rape must have been a much more frequent crime than female rape. Why? The efficiency of marriage and its concomitant demands for chastity, modesty, and virginity. It paid for parents in the semi-civilized world to keep their daughters locked up. And because of the physical unavailability of young girls, heterosexual men found that young boys were convenient. Gay men are by no means the primary villains in the story of male rape, as Lord Byron could tell us.

• • •

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Dare to Defeat ObamaCare

As long as the health care reform plan envisioned by the Obama administration and congressional Democrats was just a series of slogans, it was easy for the left to build support for it and difficult for the right to imagine how it could be stopped. It is hard, after all, to object to vague promises to cut health care costs *and* cover the uninsured *and* improve health outcomes. The brute fact of Democratic domination of Washington gave key health industry players an incentive to look as if they wanted to cooperate with the Obama administration. The whole affair began to assume an air of inevitability.

But as general slogans give way to particular plans, reality is setting in. Outlines and drafts of the key House and Senate bills began to emerge last week, and the grim reality of what the Democrats in fact have in mind has started to exercise an undeniable effect upon the politics of health care.

The fact is, the Democrats' proposals are a liberal wish list of expansions of the role of government in health care, combining an array of taxes, regulations, incentives, and mandates aimed over time to create a massive and unfunded new entitlement that would limit patient choices, ration care, and bankrupt the Treasury. The Democrats' plan would force everyone into the system through an individual mandate and lead employers to drop their health coverage; their new public insurance plan would then price private insurers out of the game and attract the refugees from private coverage into the public system. All of this would put us well on the road to government-run health care.

At the core of this scheme, and of the growing political restlessness about it, is the proposed government insurance "option"—essentially a new insurance company run by the federal government. Its defenders argue it would have no inherent advantage over private insurers and would simply spur them to improve their offerings through healthy competition. As President Obama put it last week, "One of the options in the exchange should be a public insurance option . . . [because] if the private insurance companies have to compete with a public option, it will keep them honest and help keep prices down."

It's an interesting statement. We had thought the role of government was to set rules for honest private competition, which does keep prices down and improve products. And there are reforms that could improve the important rule-setting role government should play, and could increase private competition and transparency. But Obama wants government to be one of the competitors—in the alleged interest of honesty and price reduction. When has a government alternative produced those results? Clearly the point is to use the power of the government to impose price controls and override state rules in order to undersell private insurers. The public plan is a gradual path to single payer health care, aimed at moving American health care in a European or Canadian direction.

This has made the Obama plan increasingly controversial, if not imperiled. Essentially every Republican in Washington has expressed firm opposition to a government plan, and a growing number of Democrats are doing the same. Nebraska senator Ben Nelson has called it a deal-breaker. Louisiana's Mary Landrieu said last week she would not vote for it. Many other Democrats in the Senate and the House are wary, to say the least.

Meanwhile, those industry groups who joined President Obama at the White House for a photo-op last month are now worried. One of them, the American Medical Association, announced last week it would oppose outright any plan with a government insurance option. "The introduction of a new public plan threatens to restrict patient choice by driving out private insurers," the AMA said, and the requirements of such a plan would severely burden doctors and "would likely lead to an explosion of costs that would need to be absorbed by taxpayers." The American Hospital Association sent a letter to its members in late May clarifying that "The A.H.A. did not commit to support the 'Obama health plan' or budget." AHIP, the association of insurance providers, is preparing to mount a campaign against the public plan.

The government insurance "option" is clearly shaping up to be the first key vulnerability of ObamaCare. It is crucial to the logic of the Democrats' approach, as it would offer convenient cover both for the move toward government financing of coverage and for the rationing of care such a move would

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require. The president, congressional leaders, and key liberal interest groups have insisted it be part of any reform effort. But as outside opposition grows, it is far from clear that the government option will have the votes to pass. If it were voted down or pulled out of the Democrats' bills, the logic and the inevitability of the remainder of their reform effort would be called into question, and Republicans would face a real opportunity to make the case for their own brand of reform, and to stop the ObamaCare train in its tracks.

It is crucial that they seize the opportunity. The public plan is not the only important question in the health care debate. There are many other strong reasons for stopping a plan that would cost at least $1.5 trillion, create a huge and growing new entitlement without paying for it, impose great financial burdens on employers and individuals, displace millions of families who are happy with their existing health care arrangements, lead to increasing rationing of care, and do very little else to control health care costs. If they lose the government plan the Democrats will still pursue its ends by other means—including onerous new mandates and the federalization of insurance regulation envisioned in their bills. So conservatives need to defeat the government insurance "option"—and then move on to finish the job by exposing the other massive problems with ObamaCare, so as to bring the whole edifice of bad and dangerous "reform" crashing down.

The good news is that opinion polls suggest the vast majority of Americans do not want their health coverage forcibly changed by the federal government. Indeed, Americans today are less persuaded of the need for radical reform than they were the last time the Democrats tried to enact one, in 1993. As Michael Barone points out, "An April tracking poll conducted for the Kaiser Family Foundation shows that voters rank changing health care below strengthening the economy, stabilizing Medicare and Social Security, and reducing the federal budget deficit on a list of eight possible priorities. . . . The blunt fact is that most Americans are satisfied with their health insurance and don't believe major legislation will improve things for them."

The American public is right. ObamaCare is wrong. It should and can be defeated. It is moderates and Democrats who ultimately will defeat it late this year or next—but they will do so only if Republicans stand firm now and conservatives make the arguments now. If we do, and this fight goes well, the struggle to save the country from ObamaCare could mark the beginning of a new center-right coalition to restrain the grossly excessive ambitions of the administration and congressional Democrats, with regard not only to health care but to spending and borrowing, and to the role and reach of government more broadly.

—*Yuval Levin and William Kristol*

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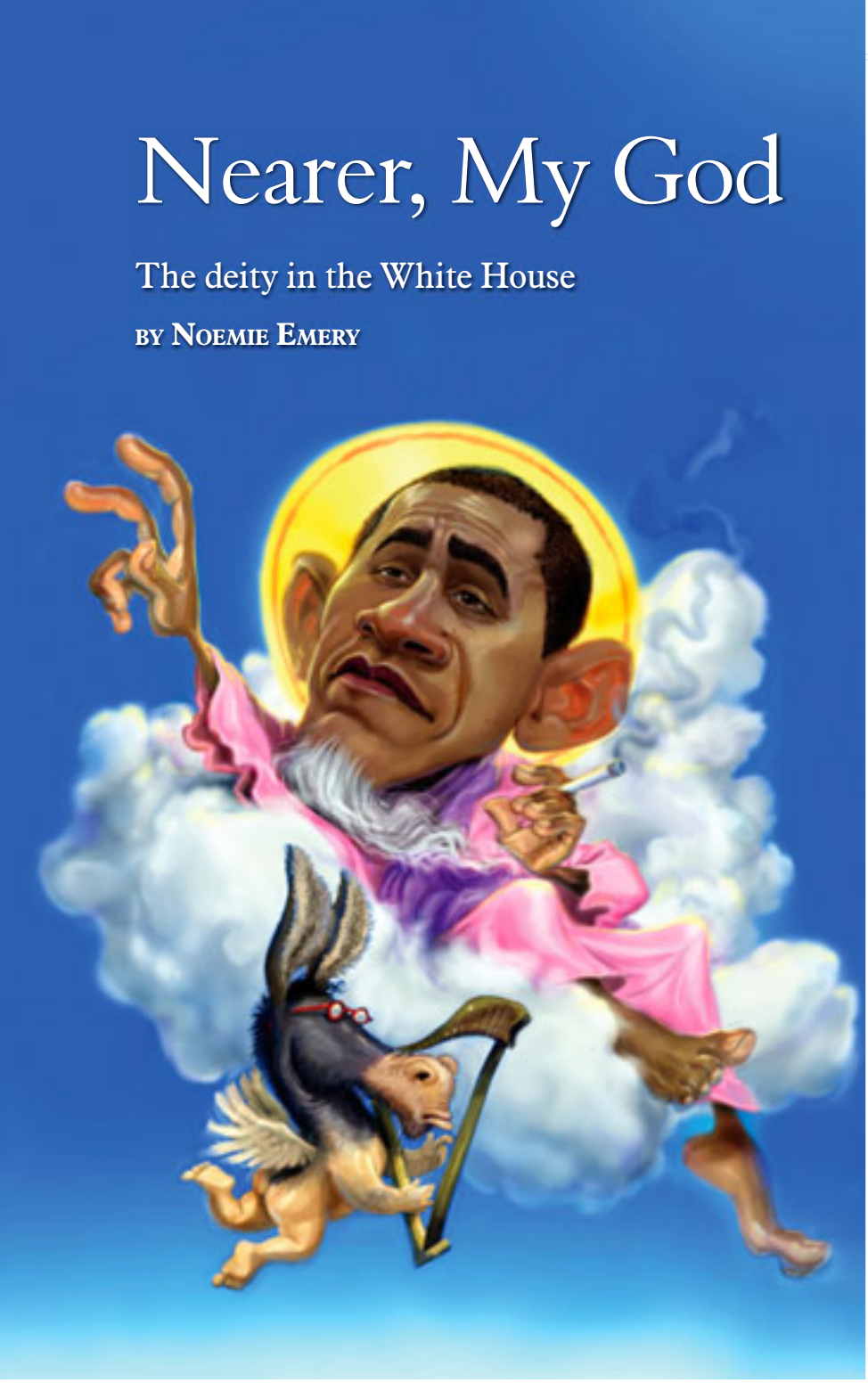
Nearer, My God

The deity in the White House

BY NOEMIE EMERY



When Gerard Baker a year ago wrote in the *Times* of London that Barack Obama had "Ventured Forth to Bring Light to the World," it was widely acknowledged to be a clever satire, but this past week we have broken new ground in divinity politics. Forget the comparisons to our Slain Prince (John F. Kennedy), to our Good Father (Franklin D. Roosevelt), and even to Abraham Lincoln, the closest thing to a martyred saint that Americans have in our secular lexicon. These are mere mortals. According to those who should know—Chris Matthews of MSNBC, and Evan Thomas of the New Improved *Newsweek*, which is the MSNBC of print media—Obama has had a promotion. No more a Messiah, who was, after all, partly human, Obama is the Real Deal, the Big Cheese, the Big Enchilada. He is Himself, without qualifications. Obama is God.

Obama being Obama, however, (and *Newsweek* being *Newsweek*), this is not quite your usual God. This is not the God of Battles, to whom Henry V prayed before Agincourt. This is not "Our fathers' God, to Thee / Author of Liberty / to Thee we sing." This is definitely not the God of the "Battle Hymn of the Republic," as this God isn't given to trampling anything, and when it comes to the terrible swift sword, you can simply forget it. This God doesn't do swords, much less battles. This is a modern God, a media God, a God for Whole Foods, and the Politics & Prose bookstore on upper Connecticut Avenue, a God who is into recycling. There is the God of the Old Testament, and the God of the New Testament, but this is the God of the Newsroom. Religious tradition tells us that God created man in His image, but the press has created this God in its image—diverse, multilateral, and nonconfrontational. He is cool, hip, urbane, and extremely un-Texan. He is all that the Fourth Estate values in life, and aspires to be in its own private dealings. He is all it holds dear.

The proximate cause of this special effusion was the speech Obama had delivered in Cairo on June 4 to the world's Muslims, and the one he would give to a far different audience on the 65th anniversary of the D-Day invasion in Normandy, on June 6. "What I liked about [Obama's] speech . . . was that it showed a complete humility," Matthews said. Thomas agreed. He compared Obama's speech favorably to that given in France by Ronald Reagan in 1984 ("These are the Boys of Pointe du Hoc") on the 40th anniversary of D-Day. "For [Reagan's] first term, it was a clenched fist," he said. "We built up our military. . . . All this D-Day stuff was about

Noemie Emery is a contributing editor to THE WEEKLY STANDARD *and a columnist for the* Washington Examiner.

GARY LOCKE

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war" (but D-Day itself was all about war). Obama, however, is above all this "stuff." "Obama's not doing that. . . . He's the teacher. He's going to say, 'now children, stop fighting and quarreling with each other.'"

"Reagan was all about America," Thomas continued. "Obama is 'we are above that now.' We're not just parochial, we're not just chauvinistic, we're not just provincial. . . . Obama's standing above the country, above the world. He's sort of God."

But the whole point of God, at least in the viewpoint of us human beings, is that He does *not* stand above or apart from the world. He inspires men to fight when attacked and for justice and freedom, sustains them in trouble, and consoles them in days of defeat. Indeed, the God of Our Fathers took sides and played favorites. He wiped out the Egyptians pursuing the Hebrews, to give just one example. He made a covenant with the Children of Israel; then He made a covenant with the Massachusetts Bay Colony, which turned in 1776 into a covenant with the entire United States of America, as it expanded across the continent, and even to places beyond. The point was not that they were favored as such, but that they were obliged to promote some ideas and some values, among them the one that man had been made in God's image. *Newsweek*'s God is not the one to whom Lincoln appealed, or the Founders invoked as the source of our liberties, or the one to whom Dwight Eisenhower and Franklin Roosevelt prayed on June 6, 1944, as they sent men out to be killed by and kill people who, if a "teacher" had said, "children, stop fighting," would pay no attention at all (or else kill the teacher).

If God is not supposed to be detached and impartial, neither is the American president. He may be a man of the world, and sometimes he is, but he is first and foremost our national leader, elected to protect the American people and to ruthlessly deal with their enemies. He is not expected to be impartial as between our interests and the interests of others; or between our allies' interests, and those of their enemies. Outreach to the Muslim world is all very well, but the words "Muslim world" are themselves a misnomer. Lebanon is not Iran, which is not Saudi Arabia, which is not Indonesia. There is a difference between a dispute between Jordan and Israel, and one between Israel and Hamas or Iran, and the president is expected to know it, and act accordingly.

The famously bellicose Theodore Roosevelt helped make an impartial peace in 1905 between Japan and Russia, but this involved no vital American interests. He did not say "children, stop fighting," nor did cousin Franklin, years later, when Germany threatened the West. "We actually do not want our president to 'stand above the country,'" notes Peter Wehner, correctly. "And we do not believe it is particularly sophisticated to disparage as chauvinistic and provincial those who speak up for her."

But some of us do. "Another Arab analyst . . . said that Obama didn't sound like a U.S. president at all but more like an enlightened regional leader," an NBC correspondent told Chris Matthews, with an air of approval. To which Matthews answered, "You make me happy. That's what we have to do in the world."

For almost four decades, the left and the media (do we repeat ourselves?) have waited for a president who sounds above it all, and they are in heaven now that the Word is made Flesh. And what flesh it is. Does it hurt that Obama is graceful and slender, when most of these pundits are sucking in paunches; that he's glowing and tan while they are washed out and pallid; that he looks as if he's on an permanent photo shoot for a Ralph Lauren ad or the Burberry catalogue? This is a God with chiseled pectoral muscles and a Portuguese Water Dog, wearing "moral authority" like an Armani jacket, while wholly at home in *Men's Vogue*.

And the Democrats have their slogans in place for the 2012 election: Obama: Like God, Only Better! Like God, Only Cuter! Like God, Only Cool! ♦

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At Least He Isn't a Traitor to His Class

The all-too-familiar story of W. Kendall Myers.

BY SAM SCHULMAN

The W. Kendall Myers treason story—the retired State Department gent and never-published scholar whose 30 years of skillful espionage on Cuba's behalf has recently come to the notice of the authorities—has already produced one great benefit. Not for some years have we seen newspaper writing like this in the *Washington Post*:

> He was a courtly State Department intelligence analyst from a prominent family who loved to sail and peruse the *London Review of Books*. Occasionally, he would voice frustration with U.S. policies, but to his liberal neighbors in Northwest D.C. it was nothing out of the ordinary. "We were all appalled by the Bush years," one said.

Mary Beth Sheridan and Del Quentin Wilber in only a few Updikean brushstrokes paint the character of W. Kendall Myers (age 72) and his wife Gwendolyn (age 71).

Until he retired in 2007, Myers was an official at the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), a group within the State Department that scrapbooks intelligence supplied by the 18 federal and military agencies that actually do legwork and plops it on the desk of the secretary of state. Myers is also one of some 130 "professorial lecturers" at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, a title he has held since 1979. Although Myers is a Ph.D.—his 1972 Hopkins dissertation defending Neville Chamberlain was titled "A Rationale for Appeasement"—his SAIS rank is really nonacademic, shared by a floating crew of 130-odd part-time lecturers, mostly State Department employees and other diplomatic professionals who give classes from time to time. Mrs. Myers was an executive in the computer department of Riggs Bank—a bank often said to have cooperated with the CIA. And since 1979, the government believes that the Myerses have been passing classified information to the Cuban authorities. The couple told FBI agents that they are passionate and committed supporters of Fidel Castro and the transformation he has wrought upon Cuba.

Castro's couple in Washington: W. Kendall and Gwendolyn Myers

GETTY IMAGES

Sam Schulman, a writer in Virginia, was publishing director of the American *and publisher of* Wigwag.

It is astounding to the *Washington Post* team and to the neighbors and former colleagues they interviewed that a man of Myers's breeding, education, and charm could have dedicated himself to the enslavement of the Cuban people. A colleague from State was particularly astonished because Myers never spoke about Latin America at all, much less Cuba, "ever, ever." It is depressing that our striped pants brigade expects so little of what John le Carré calls "tradecraft" from our spies. Did they imagine the Myerses would wear Che T-shirts and hang souvenir Venceremos Brigade machetes on the walls of their offices?

Myers's academic colleagues are also stunned. SAIS professor David P. Calleo, who often invited Myers—despite his lowly rank—to co-teach with him, thinks Myers's treachery is "out of character." He told the *Post* that Myers "has this amazing intellectual curiosity" and is "open to all kinds of ideas." This description is high praise, since Calleo is himself open to all kinds of ideas. One of these ideas is that disloyal American Jews have mesmerized the United States through their control of the media into supporting a friendly power that really ought not to exist at all.

Despite his learning and his intellectual curiosity, Calleo is unaware that some of the greatest traitors to the Western democracies were notable for their intellectual curiosity. The KGB spy Guy Burgess, for example, was the "most brilliant, compelling, promising human being" that his Cambridge peer Noel Annan had ever met. Myers, too, has a high opinion of Burgess and the Cambridge Ring of traitors. According to Tom Murray, a SAIS student in the 1990s who looked up his lecture notes when Myers was arrested, "Myers suggested they were called by their sense of duty to 'save' Europe (rather than the British Empire), and that U.S. and U.K. policies 'turned them into' spies." Murray was also impressed by Myers's "dapper Anglophile" wardrobe and sense of style.

Myers didn't charm everyone at SAIS. Another colleague remembers

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Myers in a different way: "droopy mustache, air of fey, bemused irony, obvious condescension about the petty follies of U.S. foreign policy, love of Europe, unexpressed but evident disdain for America"—in other words, a man with no curiosity at all who feels taking in new ideas is beneath him. One begins to see the truth in Fielding's observation that it requires an unusually "penetrating eye to discern a fool through the disguise of good breeding."

To the amateur of treason, there is something wonderfully familiar about the Kendall Myers saga—and it has nothing to do with his ideas or his teaching. Rather, it is the class markers—markers that make a spy-hunter of the old school feel like it's the first day of grouse season. Myers's patrician upbringing and manners disarmed suspicion. But they also injured him in a way that could only be healed by personal attachment to the ill-mannered man who turned Cuba into a charnel house.

A decade ago, Edward Luttwak declared that "snobs made better spies." In America, we have our own set of patrician disloyalists and admirers of mass murder. The Communist party, famous in the 1930s and 1940s for having the best-looking girls, commanded the enthusiasm of some very well-tailored men and chic women: Frederick Vanderbilt Field of Hotchkiss and Harvard, Corliss Lamont (Exeter and Harvard), Ralph Ingersoll (Hotchkiss and Yale), Alger Hiss (Hopkins and Harvard Law), Michael Whitney Straight of Dartington Hall and Cambridge (and son of Dorothy Payne Whitney), Martha Dodd (Vassar), Donald Ogden Stewart (Yale and the Algonquin Round Table), Molly Day Thacher of Vassar (Mrs. Elia Kazan and the daughter of a Yale president). Et in Chicagoland ego: Ernest Hemingway and Bill Ayers.

To these gentlemen and ladies, Myers is about as close as Gatsby gazing over from West Egg at the Buchanans in East Egg. Although the *Post*'s Sheridan announced on NPR that he was a "man from one of Washington's most prestigious and storied families, a prep school background, elite universities," she neglected the crucial point. Myers's accomplishments were deeply mediocre measured against what his family and he himself must have expected.

On his mother's side, he was the great-grandson of Alexander Graham Bell. His grandmother married into the Grosvenor-Hubbard dynasty, which organized Bell Telephone and founded the National Geographic Society (and still chairs its board). Myers's mother married a soon to be successful Washington cardiologist, Walter Kendall Myers (Princeton and Johns Hopkins). Until 2009, journalists could always get a paragraph out of the Bush dynasty and their Skull & Bones memberships. Myers's great-uncle Alphonso Taft, father of Willam Howard, *founded* Bones.

A colleague was astonished because Myers never spoke about Latin America at all, 'ever, ever.' It is depressing that our striped pants brigade expects so little of what John le Carré calls 'tradecraft' from our spies. Did they imagine the Myerses would wear Che T-shirts and hang Venceremos Brigade machetes on their walls?

And Kendall himself? Like Henry Adams in his *Autobiography*, "no child, born in the year, held better cards than he. He could not refuse to play his excellent hand." But something went badly wrong. Instead of a first-rate New England or Delmarva prep school, Myers attended the third-tier Mercersburg Academy in his father's Pennsylvania hometown. He went to an Ivy League college, but it was Brown (don't scream, Gen-Xers, long before you were born or attended Brown or desperately wanted to or pretended that you had, it was, in the 1950s and 1960s, known as the "armpit of the Ivy League").

There were also emotional issues: After his father's death in 1964, Myers stopped being Walter Jr. and styled himself as W. Kendall. His Johns Hopkins doctorate earned him an assistant professorship at SAIS from 1972 to 1979, but for some reason—probably having to do with the eternally unpublished dissertation (you can find it cited in scholarly books for decades as "the yet-unpublished writings of Kendall Myers")—he did not discern tenure in his future. According to the *Post*'s narrative, based on the accounts of his friends, "his life was rocked by tragedy and difficulties" in the mid-1970s. In 1975, "Myers was driving a car that slammed into a 16-year-old girl in Northwest Washington, near his childhood home, killing her. Myers felt terrible about the crash." In 1977 he divorced his first wife, Maureen Walsh. On the basis of her name alone, it seems likely she had not fit well in the Grosvenor world. Myers's second wife, a South Dakota divorcée called Gwendolyn Steingraber Trebilcock would have been just as unwelcome at Wildacres, the Grosvenor estate near Bethesda.

Myers went to Cuba in 1978 at the invitation of the Cuban mission to the U.N., according to the *Post*. "[T]he son of privilege fell in love with the communist revolution." But like many chic radicals, Myers must have felt inwardly that he was not a legitimate son of privilege. His academic failure—the dissertation only in the beginning of its long career of nonpublication, the disappointing academic career, his inability to play up and play the game—made him ready for conversion.

In a diary entry made during his Cuban idyll in 1978, we can see this child of privilege projecting his sense of self-disappointment onto his country. The robber barons disappoint him—but so do their victims:

> Cuba is so exciting! I have become so bitter these past few months. Watch-

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ing the evening news is a radicalizing experience. The abuses of our system, the lack of decent medical system, the oil companies and their undisguised indifference to public needs, the complacency about the poor, the utter inability of those who are oppressed to recognize their own condition.

Myers's indictment of the state of the American polity under Jimmy Carter is a cliché. But his admonishment of the poor for not being able to recognize their own misery and failure is rare, though also familiar. Imagine how his parents must have admonished him when he didn't get into Groton or Princeton (or wherever he actually was supposed to go), when he brought home to his Presbyterian Colonial Dame of a mother an Irish bride, when he chose not to be a professional man but a tweedy professional advocate for Neville Chamberlain—when he failed to play the hand he was dealt.

It seems that Myers chose soundly just once—when he chose no longer to allow himself any more choices. Within six months of his return to America, he was in South Dakota living with Gwendolyn, and—as Clarice Feldman shrewdly guesses in a long piece at TheAmericanThinker.com—some gunsel in the Cuban mission on Lexington Avenue drew the short straw and traveled to South Dakota to enroll the eager couple as traitors. Signing up with Fidel solved Myers's problems. From that moment, everything that the couple would do—where they lived, when they moved, where they worked—or attempted to work (the poor fellow failed the CIA entrance exam in 1981)—would no longer be their choice, but would serve the cause of the Cuban Revolution. The Cuban people unburdened Myers of his freedom to fail. And no doubt Myers is still grateful for that gift of captivity.

And for us—it's nice to know that we can look forward once again to watching the life and lies of a WASP traitor unfold in the next months, even if he's only a third-tier sort of WASP traitor. ♦

You Have the Right to Remain Silent …

Mirandizing terrorists.

BY STEPHEN F. HAYES

On two consecutive warm summer days last July, the House Armed Services Committee debated procedures for interrogating war-on-terror detainees. There were sharp exchanges between the lawmakers and during testimony from expert witnesses and disagreement on virtually every aspect of U.S. detention policy.

There was, however, one point on which there was consensus, even unanimity: that there was no need to read Miranda rights to detainees.

"There is not now nor has there ever been any interest by any member of Congress in applying the Miranda warnings to the battlefield," said Representative Vic Snyder, a Democrat from Arkansas, on July 30, 2008. Snyder, a former lawyer and ex-Marine, went on.

> I don't know why that topic keeps coming up. It was a red herring. Every year, it's been brought up since this war began. And there's not even a point in talking about it. . . . There is no interest in this Congress in applying any Miranda warning to the battlefield. And if anyone were to apply it, I can assure you that every member of Congress and the American people would be shocked. They would not want that.

The next day Representative Patrick Murphy, a Democrat from Pennsylvania, echoed those sentiments. Murphy, an Iraq war veteran and a former prosecutor, said:

> [W]hen you're fighting enemy combatants they don't get constitutional rights on the battlefield, and we don't give them Miranda warnings or Article 31(b) warnings as we call them in military justice.

But—according to Representative Mike Rogers, a Republican from Michigan and a senior member of the House Intelligence Committee—the FBI has been reading Miranda rights to high-value detainees at U.S. detention facilities in Afghanistan. Rogers, a former FBI special agent and U.S. Army officer, interviewed interrogators at those detention facilities on a factfinding trip he took to Afghanistan in late May.

Officials from intelligence and law enforcement agencies explained to Rogers that they had been told to read high-value detainees their Miranda rights.

"Think about this. Some guy travels from Tunisia, shows up in Afghanistan—masterminding this plot with local insurgent leaders. Taliban, likely, because, you know, any enemy of your enemy is your friend," Rogers explains. "He goes out, he's leading a team to kill U.S. soldiers, 5,000 miles away from home, on the battlefield. They get snatched up—either before it happens or, most likely, after it happens—take him to the detention facility and an FBI agent reads him his rights." Rogers shakes his head. "Reads him his rights. That is not a law enforcement event. That's a military, enemy combatant event."

Rogers says he sought confirmation from senior intelligence and law enforcement officials. An official at the CIA did not know about the practices, but the FBI confirmed that some detainees are Mirandized

Stephen F. Hayes is a senior writer at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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and explained the procedures. "I sat down with a very high-ranking FBI official," says Rogers, "and he told me how it's happening."

Rogers also says that interrogators expressed frustration that the Red Cross has been advising detainees to take advantage of their new rights and to talk to interrogators only once they had been given a lawyer.

When The Weekly Standard broke this story online on June 9, military officials denied that Operation Enduring Freedom detainees had been Mirandized. That same day, however, the Justice Department released a statement acknowledging that detainees had, in fact, been read Miranda rights, but disputing suggestions that this was a change in "overall policy."

> There has been no policy change and no blanket instruction issued for FBI agents to Mirandize detainees overseas. While there have been specific cases in which FBI agents have Mirandized suspects overseas, at both Bagram and in other situations, in order to preserve the quality of evidence obtained, there has been no overall policy change with respect to detainees.

Yet several of the individuals responsible for conducting the interrogations of detainees told Rogers that a "change of policy" is exactly what has occurred.

Officials at the Pentagon, with the U.S. military in Afghanistan, at U.S. Central Command, and at the National Security Council referred all questions to the Justice Department. But taking questions after a speech in Washington on Thursday, CENTCOM commander General David Petraeus acknowledged that some detainees had been Mirandized, a practice he said he was "comfortable" with. "This is the FBI doing what the FBI does. There is a very limited number of cases where this has been done."

The Justice Department has refused to be specific about the number. Matt Miller, the top public affairs official at the Justice Department, said:

> I can't comment on how many people have been Mirandized in recent months or years, as that information might relate to ongoing investigations and prosecutions, but there has been no policy change—the FBI Mirandizes suspects overseas to preserve the quality of evidence and does so on a case-by-case basis, depending on the circumstances.

The Red Cross, too, declined to discuss numbers, citing its "direct and confidential dialogue with U.S. authorities." But Simon Shorno, a spokesman for the Red Cross, said that while his organization will continue to press for more rights for detainees, "some progress has been made."

Obama administration officials told reporters on background that the policy was not a change because detainees had been Mirandized during the Bush administration. That's technically true, but Bush administration officials familiar with detainee decisions told me that they can remember only one detainee who was Mirandized. They caution that there may have been more than one, but the story of Aafia Siddiqui stands out.

Siddiqui is a Pakistani woman married to the nephew of 9/11 mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed. She was detained in Ghazni, Afghanistan, and taken to a U.S. facility for interrogation. Shortly before her questioning began, she stole the M-4 rifle of a U.S. Army warrant officer and began shooting. (As she did this, she shouted, "Allahu Akhbar!" and told an interpreter to "Get the f— out of here!") Siddiqui was shot in the abdomen and, after a continued struggle, subdued. No one else was hurt. It was after this incident that she was read her rights having just committed an obvious crime. She was brought to New York and charged with attempted murder. Bush administration officials say Siddiqui's case is notable because it is an exception.

Late last week, Dean Boyd, a spokesman for the Justice Department, provided a more specific statement on the Miranda controversy.

> The vast majority of terrorism detainees captured abroad are and continue to be interviewed without Miranda warnings for intelligence collection purposes. In Afghanistan, where the United States has detained several thousand terrorism detainees, only a small handful have been Mirandized. Several of these Mirandized interviews in Afghanistan took place before Jan. 20, 2009. The determination whether to Mirandize a terrorism detainee is made strictly on a case-by-case basis by career agents and prosecutors, in consultation with other relevant agencies. If, based on that consultation, it appears that national security may be best served by prosecuting that detainee, or at least preserving the prosecution option, the detainee may be Mirandized to ensure that his/her statements are admissible at trial and that the detainee can be brought to justice.

Shortly after Boyd's statement, Rogers—joined by House minority leader John Boehner—demanded more information from the Obama administration. Rogers introduced a "Resolution of Inquiry" that would, if it passed the Democratic-led House, formally ask the Obama administration to provide any information related to Mirandizing detainees.

"The idea of reading Miranda rights to terrorists captured on the battlefield is sheer lunacy," Boehner said. "It's so far outside the mainstream, in fact, that President Obama himself mocked it on *60 Minutes* a few months ago."

Rogers says that the "Resolution of Inquiry" will force discussion of the issue—and the Justice Department's broader Global Justice Initiative—at least on the committee level. And that discussion could prove interesting.

The big concern for Representative Snyder is U.S. military personnel reading Miranda rights to enemy combatants on the battlefield. He says he has no objection as a matter of policy to detainees being Mirandized by the FBI.

"I don't get what the big whoop-dee-doo is if an FBI agent, in the course of an investigation, reads Miranda rights to a detainee." ♦

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An Anti-Business President

Profit is without honor in Obama's view.

BY FRED BARNES

Is President Obama anti-business? The obvious answer is yes. Yet he insists he's a free-market guy who hates "meddling in the private sector" but has been forced to. So in deciding whether he's anti-business, let's be fair and judge Obama by nonideological and nonpartisan standards. I have four criteria: his appointments, his policies, his decisions, and his own words.

Democratic presidents are not famous for appointing businessmen, merchants, or entrepreneurs to their cabinet or senior White House staff. These are people who have started or run private businesses, created jobs, met payrolls, and made profits. Thus they might be sensitive to how government can help or hurt business enterprises, especially during an economic downturn.

The number of such people appointed by Obama: zero. Members of his cabinet and White House staff come predominantly from government, academia, think tanks, and the law. True, several were business consultants, Defense Secretary Bob Gates and Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki served on corporate boards, and White House chief of staff Rahm Emanuel spent four years as an investment banker between government jobs.

But there's no one who ran a company, hired or fired workers, or was an entrepreneur. Obama doesn't qualify either. He worked as a lawyer, law school instructor, and community organizer. As a community organizer, he did many things, but starting a profit-making business and creating jobs weren't among them.

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Now it's unfair to conclude solely on the basis of Obama's personnel decisions that he's anti-business. But his administration clearly isn't a hotbed of free marketers—quite the opposite. If any appointees sympathize with business and appreciate how free markets work, their influence has been minimal.

Second, policies. When Obama announced last week the acceleration of his economic "stimulus," he was referring only to programs run or funded by the federal government. He offered nothing, not even a tiny tax incentive, to encourage investment in business and private job creation. This reflects Obama's policy initiatives across the board. They rely entirely on more government spending, regulation, and control. Obama would dramatically expand government's role in health care, energy, the environment, education, and much more. His "five pillars that will strengthen our economy" consist of spending programs, regulation of Wall Street, and imaginary deficit reduction. There's no role for business.

No doubt Obama would love to see the business community produce more jobs. But he and his congressional allies have done nothing to promote this and quite a bit to restrain it, despite the job-killing recession. This amazed Richard Posner. "Re-regulating banking, hauling bankers before congressional committees, passing laws tightening credit card lending, and capping bonuses all impede recovery," he wrote in the *Wall Street Journal*. "All that is for later, once the economy is back on track."

Never accuse Obama of rejecting incentives. He favors them, just not for investors and business. In his town hall meeting in Green Bay, Wisconsin, last week, he said health insurance plans "should have incentives for people to use preventive services." And he praised "financial incentives" for healthful living. "If you lose weight, you will see an incentive, money in your pocket."

The third criterion is decisions made in carrying out a policy. Take the matter of propping up General Motors and Chrysler. Rather than follow a free-market approach and allow the auto companies to sink or swim on their own, he's kept them alive with taxpayer subsidies and at the expense of their investors, a.k.a creditors. Fine, but he went on to punish GM and Chrysler investors and reward the United Auto Workers, a financial backer of Obama's presidential campaign last year.

We also saw last week how Obama is handling the case of Delphi, the bankrupt auto parts manufacturer funded mainly by GM. His Auto Task Force brokered the sale of Delphi to a private equity firm, absent an auction or open bidding. This, in effect, put Obama in the leveraged buyout business. Lenders to Delphi complained, and a judge ordered an auction.

Once it intervenes, the Obama administration invariably seeks to extend its control. After bailing out banks, Obama sought authority to seize any financial institution whose collapse might be "a systemic risk" to the economy. The Obama administration would decide if there's such a risk.

And now that troubled banks are paying back some of the bailout money, Treasury Secretary Tim Geithner was asked recently by Senator Jim DeMint of South Carolina if those funds would be saved. Not quite, Geithner said. The administration retains the right to use an equal amount in future bailouts, he said.

Finally, what has Obama said as president about business and free markets? Not much that's favorable. In Green Bay, he said doctors who order more tests for patients because they get paid more reflect "a business mentality"—a comment that suggests what Obama thinks of business in general. By contrast, he spoke of "a mentality of, how do we make patients better?" Weeks ago, he denounced Chrysler

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creditors as "speculators" who refuse to sacrifice as they should.

As best I can tell, Obama loathes the profit motive or at least what he thinks it causes. He's often referred to the years prior to his election as "an era of selfishness and greed." It's not surprising he's capping the pay of CEOs whose firms took bailout money. But he's also studying "the ways in which the means and manner of executive compensation contributed to a reckless culture and quarter-by-quarter mentality that in turn have wrought havoc in our financial system." To decipher that, Obama thinks high CEO pay spurred the economic dip.

The president's commencement address at Arizona State University in May, largely ignored by the media, was suffused with animus toward the profit motive. He said those who seek "short term gain" display "a poverty of ambition." And he characterized "the formulas for success that have been peddled so frequently in recent years" this way:

> You're taught to chase after all the usual brass rings; you try to be on this "who's who" list or that top 100 list; you chase after the big money and you figure out how big your corner office is; you worry about whether you have a fancy enough title or a fancy enough car … through material possessions, through ruthless competition pursued only on your own behalf—that's how you will measure success.

That's a brutal caricature of the way most people seek to get ahead in life, support a family, and gain financial security. Obama did tell business majors to "go start a company," then quickly added, "Or why not help our struggling nonprofits find better, more effective ways to serve folks in need." It's clear which path Obama prefers.

Given the evidence, rendering a verdict on Obama and business is easy. Anti-business may be too crude a label. But this we can conclude: Obama doesn't trust free markets, he prefers government over business, he thinks Americans are too concerned about money, and he has a dark view of profits. A follower of Adam Smith, he's not. ♦

Paying for the Piper

A very British scandal wreaks havoc in the mother of parliaments. BY ANDREW STUTTAFORD

Douglas Hogg, MP's clean moat seen in a GoogleEarth image, from the Daily Telegraph

France is a famously volatile place. Talk of cake can trigger a revolution. The British are made of more phlegmatic stuff. Pastry alone would never do the trick. What it takes, it turns out, are a tea caddy, jellied eels, vitamin supplements, a sandwich cage (I have no idea), Scotch eggs (don't ask), dog food, a stainless steel dog bowl, a leather bed, six "leather-effect" dining chairs, a leather rocking chair, a leather sofa, a pink laptop, toilet seats (one of which was "glittery"), horse manure, Christmas tree decorations, potpourri candles, hanging baskets, an HD-ready 32-inch television, a 26-inch LCD television, a 40-inch flat-screen television, a 42-inch plasma television, light bulbs, people to change light bulbs, a pewter-finish radiator cover, mock Tudor beams, "imperial thermostatic" faucets, rubber gloves, electric gates, private security patrols, moat-clearing, stable lights, a five-foot-tall floating duck house, and a "Don Juan" bookcase. And, of course, a newspaper: in this case the *Daily Telegraph* gleefully telling appalled readers that these were among the many, many items they had been asked to buy for their Members of Parliament.

If you are wondering why exactly British taxpayers should be paying for the horse manure used to fertilize David Heathcoat-Amory's garden, the beginnings of an answer can be found in the fact that many MPs have to live in two places at once. They spend most of their working week in London attending parliament, but they must also (if they wish to be reelected) "nurse" their constituencies—something that often entails having a house

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there. This state of affairs was said to have forced (the verb can be debated) many MPs to maintain two homes, a burden somewhat alleviated by regulations permitting them to charge the nation for the cost of running that second home. It's when you come to define *cost* that the fun begins. Mortgage interest, absolutely. Utility bills, sure. Moat clearing, uh, maybe not. But so far as Parliament's permissive fees office was concerned, moat clearing was indeed fine.

That the full disclosure of this state of affairs could cause trouble was no great surprise. Fears that what has happened would happen explain the prolonged and desperate struggle to exempt MPs' expenses from the "right to know" provisions of the Freedom of Information Act passed by the Labour government in 2000, a struggle that eventually ended in failure early this year. Even then some critics worried that provisions to allow MPs a limited right to "edit" what would be released might be abused. Such concerns were rendered moot when copies of electronic records of MPs' expenses—detailed down to the last gloriously petty and last ingloriously questionable claim—were leaked to the *Telegraph*. That newspaper splashed the story in early May and has been drip-feeding an enraged and enthralled public with further revelations ever since. The resulting scandal has ruined careers, is helping destroy a government (which was doing a good job of destroying itself), and is wrecking the reputation of the mother of parliaments.

In some respects, this has been a very British scandal. The reimbursement policy that lies at its heart was the result of typically British fudge. Its extraordinary generosity (it is likely that only a few MPs will be shown to have broken the letter rather than the spirit of the rules) was an attempt to allow politicians to keep up financially with their professional peers in a prosperous era without going through the political awkwardness of voting themselves the sort of pay increase many thought that they deserved. (*Yes Minister*'s Sir Humphrey would, doubtless, have approved.) The scandal's minutiae are also very British—that tea caddy and the obsession with gardening—and so is the delight with which Britons, never so deferential as Americans imagine, have witnessed the puncturing of formerly mighty reputations. Puncturing? Oh yes. Pause for a moment to digest the splendid news that the MP who claimed for that glittery toilet seat was John Reid, a former Labour home secretary previously known as a Glaswegian tough guy. Previously.

And Britain being Britain, a land where acute class sensibility is curse, art form, and blood sport, there has also been plenty for snobs and their reverse to savor. The snooty will have snickered at the thought of Labour's horny-handed (in all respects) John Prescott, a former deputy prime minister who has never been slow to talk up his proletarian credentials, putting mock Tudor beams on his house. Mock Tudor! Equally the painstaking efforts by the Conservative leader David Cameron (Eton and Oxford) to persuade voters that the Tories were no longer the toffs of old will not have been helped by the fact that it was a member of his team who needed help with his moat.

And Britain being Britain, journalists have been unable to resist dredging up Macaulay's well-worn observation that there is "no spectacle more ridiculous than the British public in one of its periodical fits of morality," and as always they have a point. Some of the criticism has been overwrought and unfair, an unintended consequence of a system that compelled MPs to submit details of almost every claim, however trivial, a system that could never have made them look good, but, for all its faults, is infinitely preferable to, say, the opacity of the much more corrupt procedures for "reimbursement" of expenses that have prevailed (at least up until now) in the EU's Potemkin parliament.

All the same, those claims *were* made, and they are an indication that the ideal of fair play that once underpinned the UK's once largely unwritten constitutional arrangements is dying. The temptation to see the current furor as a simple explosion of jealous rage (although that emotion has undoubtedly played its part), vaguely reminiscent of the shameful, hysterical spasm of fury and grief that followed the death of Princess Diana, should be resisted. A better comparison would be with the storm over congressional overdrafts that made so much news over here in the early 1990s. Seen in isolation, that row was overdone; seen in the context of decades of one-party control of the House of Representatives, it was long overdue.

Not all MPs were at the trough. Far from it. Nevertheless, this scandal has added further tarnish to the reputation of the political class as a whole, a class already widely perceived as greedy, venal and, in the midst of an economic crisis that may yet lead to a cap-in-hand approach to the IMF, incompetent. Equally, it's worth adding that claims by MPs that the investigation of their expenses has been overly intrusive might be more sympathetically received had those same MPs not spent so long micromanaging, sometimes very punitively, their fellow citizens.

What are Britons supposed to make of Alistair Darling, the finance minister who subjects them to a bewildering, fiercely enforced range of taxes, yet appeared to feel no qualms about sticking them with bills he received from his personal tax advisers? And what are Britons to make of those MPs who "flipped" the designation of "second homes" (yes, there were sometimes more than one) for tax and other purposes, or worse still, the handful of MPs who appeared to have sought reimbursement for "phantom" mortgages?

Under the circumstances, to criticize the reimbursement of the embattled Gordon Brown, the country's flailing, faltering prime minister, for the cost of the bagpiper he retained to play at a ceremony for veterans in a Scottish church may even seem a touch harsh. Harsh, but oddly, poetically appropriate: Those who paid for the piper may—finally—be calling the tune. ♦

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What Abortionist Killers Believe

The consequences of a fringe theology.

BY JON A. SHIELDS

The recent murder of late-term abortion specialist Dr. George Tiller cast a spotlight once again on the violent fringe of the pro-life movement. What motivates them? How do they differ from the law-abiding citizens who work and demonstrate against abortion?

Some critics of the pro-life movement have recycled the old charge that what sets the handful of violent pro-lifers apart is their moral seriousness. Unlike the hypocrites who content themselves with protests and lobbying, the argument goes, those who bomb clinics and assassinate abortionists have the courage of their conviction that abortion is murder. Writes William Saletan in *Slate*, "If a doctor in Kansas were butchering hundreds of old or disabled people . . . I doubt most members of the National Right to Life Committee would stand by. . . . Somebody would use force." The fringe who kill expose the mainstream of pro-lifers as frauds.

The reality is much more interesting. The best studies of pro-life extremism—notably James Risen and Judy L. Thomas's *Wrath of Angels*—make clear that what distinguishes pro-life bombers and assassins is not the degree of their moral conviction, but their fanatical commitment to a certain understanding of political theology.

When abortion emerged as a public issue in the 1960s, most of those who fought to keep the practice illegal were Catholics. Most Protestants, including virtually all evangelicals, stayed on the sidelines. The Southern Baptist Convention even tacitly blessed *Roe* v. *Wade*, the 1973 decision by which the Supreme Court held abortion to be an individual right, overturning the laws of 50 states.

Roe divided the pro-lifers. Most continued to work through political channels, joining state affiliates of the National Right to Life Committee. But some concluded that either amending the Constitution or transforming the composition of the Supreme Court might not be achievable in their lifetime. In frustration, they began a campaign of sit-ins. Thus, *Roe* energized pro-lifers, pushing many activists into the streets.

From the beginning, their civil disobedience was shaped by their theology. The early Catholic activists came out of the antiwar left and were inspired by liberal Christians. John O'Keefe, the founder of the rescue movement (whose name derives from Proverbs 24:11: "Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter"), was deeply influenced by Martin Luther King Jr. and especially the Catholic monk Thomas Merton. O'Keefe wrote a recruiting pamphlet, *A Peaceful Presence* (1978), that encouraged pro-lifers to practice nonviolent civil disobedience (blocking clinic entrances, for example, and going limp when arrested) as a spiritual act and a symbolic sharing in the helplessness of unborn children.

Early rescuers asked their friends in the antiwar movement and other liberal causes to join them but were roundly rebuffed. Yet even as those pleas fell on deaf ears, conservative evangelicals were rethinking their own political theology in ways that would forever change the rescue movement.

Given the recent history of the evangelical right, it is easy to forget just how apolitical large numbers of conservative Protestants were during most of the 20th century. Evangelicals, in particular, tended to believe that saving souls by spreading the gospel should take priority over political engagement. Most also accepted a view of the end times known as premillennialism, which teaches that the world must fall even deeper into sin before Christ returns to establish his thousand-year reign. This eschatological view encouraged separation from the world and made social reform seem futile at best.

By the late sixties liberals were criticizing evangelicals for neglecting the great public questions of the day. The conservative Presbyterian Francis Schaeffer agreed. More than any other thinker, Schaeffer mobilized evangelicals to join the pro-life movement by changing the way they thought about politics. Contrary to the prevailing emphasis in evangelical churches, Schaeffer insisted that Christians had a duty to make the world better rather than barricade themselves in subcultures. He further taught that political quietism did not follow from premillennialism. As he put it, "Even if I knew the world was going to end tomorrow, I would still plant a tree today."

Schaeffer advocated defiance of government in the matter of abortion. In *A Christian Manifesto* (1981), he concluded, "At a certain point there is not only the right, but the duty, to disobey the state." This was heady stuff for a subculture that had long insisted that any social movement was a distraction from the Great Commission, Jesus' command to his followers to "go and make disciples of all nations."

Nearly every evangelical leader who became prominent in the pro-life movement credited Schaeffer for clearing away the theological obstacles to activism. Among them was

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Randall Terry, an evangelical convert who turned the rescue movement into something big.

Terry succeeded where O'Keefe had failed. He founded Operation Rescue in 1986 and built it into the largest campaign of civil disobedience since the anti-Vietnam war movement, engineering massive blockades of abortion clinics in New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and Wichita. The National Abortion Federation estimates that between 1977 and 1993, the movement was responsible for more than 600 blockades leading to over 33,000 arrests.

The success of Operation Rescue turned on the power of particular religious appeals. Terry approached independent fundamentalist pastors and told them that evangelicals had blood on their hands because they had stayed out of the abortion conflict. Critics who disparaged the rescue movement as self-righteous misunderstood it: It was a way for evangelicals to show repentance for their sins. As Risen and Thomas explain, "Terry would sell the church on Operation Rescue as a form of atonement."

The fundamentalists in Operation Rescue did tend to be more militant than the early Catholic demonstrators. Rather than simply go limp and let police officers arrest them, for instance, many resisted by grabbing onto whatever they could. Nonetheless, they were far from violent. (Many, in fact, complained of police brutality.) Not all participants, however, were persuaded by Schaeffer's insistence that their agitation be peaceful. A handful radicalized his teachings to justify and inspire violence.

There is little in Michael Bray's early life to suggest that he would become the spiritual leader of the violent fringe. At Bowie High School in Maryland, he was a football player and state wrestling champion. He was an Eagle Scout. Following in his father's footsteps, he earned a spot at the U.S. Naval Academy.

But Bray dropped out of the academy and hitch-hiked across the country seeking adventure and direction. In Orlando he attended a Baptist tent revival and began thinking seriously about a life of faith. His search for God included flirtations with Mormonism and the Conservative Baptist Association. Under the influence of Schaeffer's writings, however, Bray was drawn to major figures of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century, especially John Calvin and John Knox.

Calvin emphasized the biblical doctrine of predestination, that God determined who would be saved and damned before the creation of the world. Not only are the "elect" chosen by God for salvation, but, according to Calvin, they should also govern. Only public officials, however, could legitimately use force to punish crimes.

Only public officials, according to Calvin, could legitimately use force to punish crimes. John Knox disagreed. He suggested that any member of the elect, not just public officials, could use force to achieve God's justice. Knox's teachings convinced Michael Bray that 'it was appropriate for the godly man to take the law into his own hands.'

Knox disagreed. He suggested that any member of the elect, not just public officials, could use force to achieve God's justice. As Risen and Thomas underscore, Knox's teachings convinced Bray that "it was appropriate for the godly man to take the law into his own hands, because his hands were the tools of the Lord." Indeed, Bray actually "came to believe John Knox was speaking to him across the centuries, telling him that it was his duty as a Christian to fight abortion by any means necessary."

Bray soon began orchestrating clinic bombings, for which he would serve time in prison. In 1984 he and his impressionable protégés Michael Spinks and Kenneth Shields (no relation to the author) helped set an annual record for bombings that stands to this day. Abortion facilities were bombed in six cities in the Washington, D.C., region. These early attacks, however, were successfully timed to avoid human casualties.

In the early 1990s, Operation Rescue collapsed under the weight of its participants' exhaustion and Terry's authoritarian leadership. Then in 1994, a new federal law increased the penalties for blocking access to clinics. Now isolated, the seriously violence-prone were left to their own worst impulses. Violence escalated. For the first time, abortion providers were targeted for execution. In the period 1993-98, six people were killed by four shooters, and a seventh lost his life in a clinic bombing.

The extremists coalesced in what they called the Army of God and declared war: "We, the remnant of God fearing men and women of the United States of Amerika, do officially declare war on the entire child-killing industry." Army of God manuals contained instructions on how to acquire explosives and bomb clinics.

For inspiration, the radicals turned to Bray's *A Time to Kill* (1994), a book that could not have been more different from O'Keefe's *A Peaceful Presence*. As Risen and Thomas report, Bray became the "national spokesperson for violence and retribution" and his book "must reading among extremists."

One of these was Paul Hill, a radical Presbyterian minister, a graduate of the Reformed Theological Seminary, who quickly rose to leadership in the Army of God. He was the author of the group's infamous 1994 "Defensive Action Statement," a petition endorsing violence that was signed by 29 radicals. Hill would be executed by the state of Florida in 2003 for killing an abortion doctor and a clinic escort.

Shelly Shannon also found inspiration in Bray's writings. A

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housewife, Shannon bombed clinics in four states before wounding George Tiller in an attempt on his life in 1993. She is now in prison. In her diary, Shannon described her religious experiences just prior to various acts of violence. Hours before she bombed a clinic, for instance, she wrote: "If I die doing this, I die in Christ, walking obediently in a work He gave me." And hours before shooting Tiller, she reflected, "This morning in bed it seemed God asked, Is there any doubt?" "No, Lord. Please help me do it right."

Others, whether or not they were directly influenced by Bray's writings, shared his disregard for the legitimacy and authority of the American government. Scott Roeder, who has been charged with Tiller's murder, is a member of the Montana Freemen, a Christian organization that has declared itself outside the authority of the government and engaged in an armed conflict with the FBI in 1996.

Whatever the shades of difference among them, virtually all the radicals have cherished a bellicose reading of a handful of Old Testament verses, especially Genesis 9:6: "Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man." The fringe seemingly ignore the New Testament, particularly the passages enjoining respect for civil authorities.

In the aftermath of Tiller's shooting, pro-life organizations were quick to denounce vigilante justice and reaffirm their well-established fidelity to American democracy. As post-1960s activism goes, the pro-life movement is unusually patriotic.

Its many Catholic and Protestant participants, moreover, obviously do not understand their faith to require them to kill doctors or nurses—or mothers or fathers—involved in the great evil of abortion. On the contrary, their behavior is generally consonant with orthodox Christian teaching on murder ("Thou shalt not . . ."), civil government ("Render unto Caesar . . ."), and the duty of believers to do good and resist evil by all legitimate means. ♦

Now Comes the Hard Part

Hezbollah loses in Lebanon.

BY DAVID SCHENKER

On June 7, Lebanon's pro-West March 14 coalition surprised the world by defeating the Hezbollah-led March 8 alliance in parliamentary elections. Although March 14 was the incumbent, the coalition was widely seen as the underdog vis-à-vis its Iranian- and Syrian-backed opponents. The victory not only returns the March 14 coalition to power, it confirms for the second time in four years the anti-extremist orientation of Beirut.

The election outcome is good news for Washington and Beirut. If Hezbollah had triumphed, the Obama administration would have reevaluated its financial and political support for Lebanon. Instead, the organization's defeat at the hands of a U.S. ally may at least temporarily slow the momentum of Tehran's regional "resistance" agenda.

But March 14 is not out of the woods. Despite the majority's victory there are no mandates in Lebanese politics. And if recent history is any indication, the coming months will be perilous for the majority, especially if it tries to take bold initiatives.

After winning elections in 2005, for example, March 14 dared to raise the sensitive topic of Hezbollah's weapons. Subsequently, a three-year campaign of assassination against anti-Hezbollah politicians—believed to have been perpetrated by Syria and its Lebanese allies—decimated its parliamentary majority, nearly reversing the election results.

More recently, in May 2008 when the government made decisions to enhance state sovereignty inimical to Hezbollah's interests, the organization's militia invaded Beirut. Hezbollah only returned to the barracks when the decisions were reversed and March 14 agreed to provide the organization with the ability to block all future government initiatives, a perquisite known as a "blocking third" of the cabinet.

While Hezbollah has conceded defeat at the polls and said it would "accept the will of the people," the organization has made clear that no spoils will go to the victor. A day after the elections, Hezbollah's parliamentary leader Mohammed Raad said that the "crisis" in Lebanon would continue if the majority persisted in raising questions about Hezbollah's arsenal. He also suggested that regardless of the election results, Hezbollah should again be awarded the blocking third. March 14 is on record as opposing this concession.

Raad himself did not indicate what would happen should March 14 refuse to grant this veto power to its foes, but Beirut's leading pro-Hezbollah daily *Al Akhbar* provided a clue. Either Hezbollah would retain its blocking third or Lebanon would "return to before May 7 [when Hezbollah invaded Beirut] heading toward a collision; no one knows where it will lead." Essentially, if March 14 demurs, Hezbollah has threatened a return to civil war.

Hezbollah's allies in Damascus have been no less explicit about their expectations. In Syria, the government-controlled press is publishing articles by "scholars" recommending the establishment of a Lebanese

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Photos of Saad Hariri, whose coalition won the parliamentary elections in Lebanon, held aloft by supporters rallying in Beirut

JOSEPH BARRAK / AFP / GETTY IMAGES

"national unity government" with Hezbollah veto power. The first official postelection proclamation by a Syrian official echoed this sentiment, calling for a "spirit of consensus" to prevail. Syrian president Bashar Assad phoned his Lebanese counterpart, Michel Suleiman, and congratulated him on the success of Lebanese consensus in the elections, a "spirit . . . necessary to face the forthcoming developments and tackle them."

While these messages seem innocuous enough, given the history of Syrian meddling in Lebanon, March 14 understandably views such unsolicited suggestions as other than friendly advice. The Obama administration's initial reaction to the elections has also generated anxiety among the majority. Of particular concern was the White House statement calling on March 14 to "maintain your power through consent," a message seen as U.S. support for providing Hezbollah with a parliamentary veto.

During his June 4 address to the Muslim world, President Obama said that "America respects the right of all peaceful and law-abiding voices to be heard around the world, even if we disagree with them." There is little doubt that Washington continues to "disagree" with Hezbollah, but it is also true that the organization is neither peaceful nor law-abiding.

The coming weeks will be tense in Beirut, as the winning coalition navigates the formation of a government and its ministerial statement, the policy guidance for Beirut. If March 14 has its way, unlike in 2005, this statement will not legitimate Hezbollah's weapons, which the U.S. government describes as "a threat to Lebanon." In addition to opposing a Hezbollah blocking third in the cabinet, March 14 appears to favor the appointment of Saad Hariri—the leader of the bloc—as prime minister. Syria is already signaling its preference for another candidate believed to be more disposed to Damascus.

Given Hezbollah's preponderance of force, March 14 may not ultimately succeed in its effort to deny the blocking third or to compose a ministerial statement that strengthens state sovereignty vis-à-vis the Shiite militia. But the Obama administration should not undermine March 14's ambitious attempts to effect real change in Lebanon. While the election was a good start, Washington's continued support for March 14 in this difficult period will be critical if there is any hope of consolidating the election gains. ♦

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The Exploding Carbon Tax

The costs imposed by the cap and trade system are equivalent to raising a family of four's income tax by 50 percent.

By Martin Feldstein

The cap and trade legislation supported by the Obama administration is a stealth strategy for a massive long-term tax increase. It is a large tax on all American households, and the tax burden rises in future years without any need for further legislation. It will evolve into an enormous new source of tax revenue for the government.

A cap and trade system is supposed to reduce carbon dioxide (CO_2) emissions by raising the price of CO_2-intensive goods and services like gasoline, electricity, and a wide range of industrial products. This, in theory, will induce consumers to shift their spending to services and products that involve lower levels of CO_2 emissions. It achieves these price increases by requiring firms that create CO_2 in their production process, or sell goods like gasoline that create CO_2 when used, to have a permit per ton of CO_2 emission.

The Congressional Budget Office estimates that reducing the level of CO_2 to 15 percent less than the total level of U.S. emissions in 2005 would require permit prices that would increase the cost of living of a typical household by $1,600 a year. To put that $1,600 carbon tax in perspective, a typical family of four with earnings of $50,000 now pays an income tax of about $3,000. The tax imposed by the cap and trade system is therefore equivalent to raising the family's income tax by about 50 percent. (Some advocates of a cap and trade program argue that the cost to households could be much less than $1,600 if the government uses the tax revenue to finance transfers to low income households and tax cuts to others, but since there is no way to know how the future revenue would actually be used, the only number we have to consider is the $1,600 direct increase in the burden on households.)

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The Waxman-Markey bill that recently passed the House Energy and Commerce Committee would cause an even greater initial rise in the cost of living by its requirement to cut CO_2 emissions to 17 percent less than the 2005 level of emissions rather than the 15 percent reduction assumed in the CBO estimates. (European officials are, moreover, calling for the United States to agree to a much bigger initial cut—20 percent less than the U.S. emission level in 1990.)

As the legislated CO_2 reduction increases automatically after 2020, the price of the permits would rise to further limit consumers' demand for CO_2-intensive goods and services. The Waxman-Markey legislation requires the CO_2 level in 2050 to be an amazing 83 percent less than it was in 2005, and a study by the EPA estimates that the price of the permit would rise from about $20 a ton in 2020 to more than $75 a ton in 2050. The higher permit costs would be reflected in the prices that households would pay for CO_2-intensive goods and services.

Rises in the cost of living would be greater for households that use more energy and CO_2-intensive goods and services. The implied rate of the cap and trade carbon tax would therefore rise with income. In that way it would act like an income tax—reducing the reward for additional effort by putting a tax wedge between the individuals' additional work effort and the resulting increase in their standard of living. But while it would collect more tax from higher income households, the cap and trade tax would be a *relatively* heavier burden on lower-income and middle-income households. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that spending on "carbon based energy" is 21.4 percent of income among households in the lowest income quintile but only 4.1 percent of income in the highest income quintile.

Although the cap and trade plan that President Obama proposed during the campaign called for auctioning all of the CO_2 permits, members of Congress in heavily industrialized states and in states that use coal to generate elec-

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tricity refused to support the plan unless the auction process was eliminated. To get their support, Waxman and Markey agreed to a fundamental change in the structure of the program. Instead of auctioning the permits, about 85 percent of them would initially be given away to a variety of firms. (Since a firm that had excess permits would be able to sell them to other firms, the price of the permit would still be determined by what firms were willing to pay for excess permits, just as it would be in an auction system.) Electricity distributors would get the largest amount—more than 30 percent of the total permits. If electricity regulators required these distributors to pass along the benefit of the free permits to consumers in the form of lower electricity prices, this source of CO_2 would not be reduced. That would require raising the cost of other CO_2-intensive products to achieve the required overall reduction in CO_2.

The proposed cap and trade plan also provides an escape hatch for firms that emit CO_2. Instead of reducing their own emissions or buying permits at auction or from other firms, they could pay others to take actions that reduce global CO_2 emission. They could, for example, pay for the planting of trees to absorb CO_2 emissions from the atmosphere or pay firms in other countries that are not covered by CO_2 caps to reduce their CO_2 emissions. The *Financial Times* estimates that the regulated European market for such carbon offset credits will increase to more than $60 billion next year. Such offset activities are obviously difficult to monitor. It is even more difficult to judge the extent to which these extra CO_2 reductions would have occurred without the financial inducements.

The Waxman-Markey legislation provides that the annual giveaway of permits would eventually phase down so that more than half of all permits would be auctioned after 2050. This would create a massive rise in tax revenue that could finance new government spending without the need for any new tax legislation. The Hamilton Project at the Brookings Institution estimates that just stabilizing CO_2 emissions at the current level could produce revenue of more than $470 billion a year (in today's prices) by 2050. They estimate it would be a 9 percent increase in total non-CO_2 federal tax revenue, an amount equivalent to $200 billion a year in today's economy.

The rise in the prices of U.S. goods would make them less competitive. American firms would suffer in export markets and domestically in competition with goods imported from countries that do not impose such a high implicit tax on CO_2 emissions. There would no doubt be pressure to impose tariffs on imports from other countries that have lower carbon costs. This might be welcomed by the unions that now seek to use foreign labor practices as an excuse for tariffs on imports, but countervailing tariffs based on carbon content would hurt American consumers and threaten our global trading system.

And, despite the high cost to American households and the economy, the proposed cap and trade plan would do little to deal with concerns about global warming. Although there is a broad scientific consensus that the increasing level of total global CO_2 emissions is raising temperatures, which could have significant adverse long-term effects, the potential U.S. reduction of CO_2 would not be enough to prevent those adverse effects unless China, India, and other rapidly industrializing countries also agreed to major reductions in their CO_2 emissions.

The proponents of enacting a U.S. cap and trade program at the present time "to show U.S. leadership" so that other countries will follow are naïve to think that China and India will agree to major CO_2 reductions without financial inducements. The Chinese and Indians have stressed their opposition to any major reduction in their CO_2 emissions and have given no indication that their position would change if we enacted limits on our CO_2 emissions. It would be a big mistake to enact legisla-

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tion before the international meeting in Copenhagen in December where these issues can be discussed and a negotiation could begin.

The initial shift from an auction process to giving away permits is just one of many departures the Waxman-Markey bill makes from the type of pure cap and trade system that appeals to many economists. They favor cap and trade over administrative regulations like automobile mileage standards and smokestack scrubber requirements because the uniform price of permits allows every amount of CO_2 reduction to be achieved at the least cost to the economy. The 900-page Waxman-Markey bill imposes a wide array of costly administrative regulations that should be unnecessary if CO_2 is limited by a cap and trade plan. Fifteen percent of electricity must be produced with renewable technologies, including wind, solar, and biofuels. Household appliances must meet various efficiency standards. The Obama administration has added a 39-mile-per-gallon fleet efficiency standard for new automobiles. To the extent that these rules restrict behavior, the result will be a more expensive way of reducing CO_2 than a pure cap and trade arrangement.

The combination of permit giveaways to selected firms, separate administrative regulations aimed at CO_2 reduction, and a market for offset credits means that the Waxman-Markey bill lacks the efficiency virtues of the classic cap and trade system. Some of its supporters may not care that it reduces U.S. emissions inefficiently and does little to reduce global warming as long as it produces a large future source of government revenue. If cap and trade legislation is passed, it should be for a relatively limited period of time like five or ten years rather than the 40-plus year horizon in the Waxman-Markey bill. We need to see how the system works in practice. In particular, it is not clear how CO_2 monitoring and compliance will work in all of the participating countries.

Scientific knowledge in this field is changing rapidly, and our approach to global warming should be flexible as we learn more. One important approach being explored by scientists, geo-engineering, is not even recognized in the Waxman-Markey legislation or in the administration's original proposal. (Geo-engineering uses a variety of technologies to offset the warming effects of the level of CO_2 in the atmosphere.) If one or more of the geo-engineering methods is successful, it will be possible to have higher levels of CO_2 emissions without the adverse environmental effects. And the higher level of CO_2 will allow a higher level of economic activity and a higher standard of living. Governments around the world should be devoting more research funds to promising ideas.

If there is to be a U.S. cap and trade plan to reduce CO_2 emissions, it would be best to avoid the big revenue creation of permit auctions and the arbitrary congressional granting of free permits to favored industries and firms. Tradable electronic permits should instead be distributed directly to all households. This distribution could reflect the average spending on CO_2-intensive goods in different income groups and geographic areas. Individuals could then sell the permits through an organized auction exchange. The payments that they received would offset most of the adverse effects on their standard of living of the higher prices that they would have to pay for CO_2-intensive goods and services. Such a system of individual permit distribution would reduce CO_2 with all of the efficiency advantages of a pure cap and trade system but without increasing taxes and enlarging government. ♦

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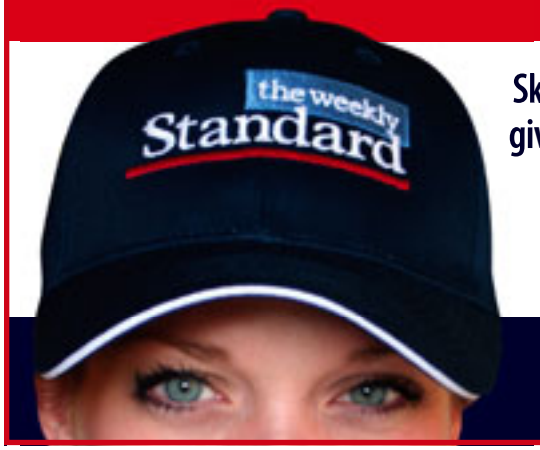

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The 'Dependence on Foreign Oil' Canard

The worst justification yet for Obama's energy plan

By Jeff Bergner

As the public's enthusiasm for a major new energy tax wanes, advocates of the administration's "cap and trade" emissions proposal have found a new justification: national security. We should adopt a cap and trade energy tax, they say, because this will reduce our dependence on foreign oil and thus strengthen America's national security. It is unsurprising that national security would be the last refuge of a policy that cannot be sold on its merits. But "energy independence" is a mantra that has been around for decades, with adherents across the political spectrum. Does it really wash as a rationale for cap and trade?

The central point to be made is this: If lessening the nation's reliance on foreign sources of energy is the goal, there are cheaper, quicker, and more reliable ways to achieve it. Moving aggressively to develop proven American energy reserves is one. To be sure, it would take years to develop the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge reserves or significantly expand our offshore drilling capacity, but a national commitment to do so would be a beginning. So would removing the legal and regulatory barriers to the development of nuclear energy. As would expanding natural gas production and clean coal technology. Even a large, straightforward tax on oil or gasoline—though devastating to our economy—would offer a quicker way to diminish U.S. reliance on foreign oil than cap and trade.

But this, of course, is not the goal of cap and trade; the goal is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by moving the American economy away from carbon-based fuels. Cap and trade is an environmentally motivated tax, pure and simple, which is being advanced for reasons which have nothing whatever to do with U.S. national security.

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Might it be possible, however, that even though cap and trade is an environmental project, it would have marginal national security benefits? After all, every American president since the 1970s has paid lip service to the notion of reducing America's reliance on foreign energy. All the while, the share of oil we import has grown, decade by decade, through Democratic and Republican administrations and Congresses. If energy independence is really so important, why have we done so little for so long?

The United States imports a large share of its automobiles from Japan, its consumer goods from China, and certain specialty metals required for defense from African nations. Is there something peculiarly dangerous about importing a large share of oil? Is oil somehow different from other products or commodities? Let's examine the dangers of reliance on foreign-sourced energy one by one.

First, could foreign oil suppliers come together to raise oil prices rapidly and throw the U.S. economy into a tailspin? We had this experience twice in the 1970s, in 1973-74 and 1978-79. But today the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is constrained in its ability to raise world oil prices and likely will remain so. OPEC countries currently produce only about 40 percent of the oil the world consumes. And OPEC has been unable to impose perfect discipline even on its own members. While the Middle East has more than 50 percent of proven reserves, oil is found in large quantities in Africa, the North Sea, Russia, South America, Mexico, and North America. The ability of oil-exporting nations in different regions, with differing governments, to cut production and raise prices has proven to be limited. Despite increasing U.S. dependence on foreign oil over the past three decades, only a small share of the ups and downs of world crude oil prices can be fairly attributed to cartel-like production decisions.

Indeed, a far more likely cause of a spike in gasoline prices would be a hurricane along the Gulf Coast disrupting domestic refining. If keeping gasoline affordable is our

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concern, we would be far better advised to expand refining capacity than to fret over imagined schemes of cartels that have long since lost their power to control markets.

Also unlikely is a politically motivated cutoff of crude oil imports. The United States happily is not in the precarious position of, say, Georgia or even portions of Europe, which are highly dependent on Russian energy. There, political manipulation of supplies is a genuine national security problem. Even the threat of a cutoff of Russian energy is a significant matter for nations dependent on that single source.

Oil-exporting nations, moreover, are every bit as dependent for their stability on oil revenues as is the United States upon imported supplies. Their governments are unlikely to survive if oil revenues are suspended even temporarily. We have seen a similar mutual dependence of supply and demand when it comes to foreign debt. Fears that China might "call in" its holdings of U.S. debt are wildly exaggerated, given China's own national interests.

It is always possible that foreign supplies of oil could be jeopardized by something other than government-mandated production cuts. In Nigeria, for instance, separatist attacks have interfered with oil pipelines and so affected world oil prices, if only marginally and temporarily. There is no denying the impact of such disruptions. But the case of Iraq since 2003 is instructive. During Saddam Hussein's final months in power, Iraq produced more than 2 million barrels of crude oil per day. After the U.S. invasion, production declined precipitously; then it gradually, though sporadically, climbed back to pre-invasion levels. This fluctuation in supply far exceeded the problems Nigeria has experienced, yet there was no significant correlation between Iraqi production and the ups and downs of world oil prices over the past six years. Indeed, the rapid rise in world oil prices in 2008 coincided with Iraq's post-surge return as a more or less normal supplier of oil.

There is no such thing as a commodity market, or any other kind of market, where prices remain completely unchanged over time. It is in the nature of markets that prices fluctuate; it is, in a way, the point of a market to send price signals. Even if the United States produced all its own energy, energy prices would fluctuate with supply and demand. We see this with the prices of agricultural commodities, where we are not only self-sufficient, but a large net exporter. A perfectly stable world energy market is neither achievable nor necessary. By and large, the world oil market has functioned in a reasonably reliable manner over three decades that have included numerous geopolitical shocks.

Now, it is true that some of the world's largest oil reserves are located in places where one might wish they were not—Russia, Venezuela, and several Middle Eastern nations. These geological accidents have permitted an outsized influence for nations which might otherwise be of less global consequence. In the long run, this is likely to be more of a problem for these nations themselves than for their customers; oil revenues have covered over the failure of these nations to develop their human capital in a more productive and sustainable manner. As for America's interests, would they be different if we were energy independent? Would our national security policy options be better?

Here's a thought experiment: Suppose the United States imported no oil from the Middle East. How would American security interests, capabilities, and options differ from what they are today?

Here is a thought experiment: Suppose the United States imported no oil from the Middle East. None. Further suppose that even if nations like Japan, China, and India continued to import Middle East oil, American energy independence so reduced world oil demand as to mitigate whatever leverage Middle East oil-exporting nations are thought to have. How would American interests, capabilities, and options differ from what they are today?

We would continue to support our democratic ally Israel, and for that reason alone the United States would continue to care deeply about the Middle East. We would also continue to seek a positive relationship with Arab countries. American policymakers would not choose to write off relationships with 400 million people in a key region of the world, even if we imported none of its oil. For these reasons, too, one supposes that U.S. policymakers would continue to seek a workable resolution to the struggle between Israel and the Palestinian people. It is difficult to see what additional leverage the United States would possess if we no longer had in place our major trading relationship with Middle East oil exporting nations.

Similarly, the United States would retain a deep and continuing interest in preventing Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. This would be true for all the reasons

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it is true today: because of the existential threat to Israel from a nuclear-armed Iran, as well as the incentive an Iranian nuke would create for nuclear weapons programs in Sunni-dominated nations like Egypt and Saudi Arabia. This would be especially true if these nations feared that an energy-independent America might lose interest in the region. Nuclear proliferation in the Middle East would be bad for the United States under any circumstances.

Even if it were energy independent, moreover, the United States would maintain a deep interest in the ungoverned or weakly governed territories in the broader Middle East. We know that such territories serve as potential bases for terrorism against the West. Think about it: The United States is gradually getting out of Iraq, which produces more than 2 million barrels of oil daily, and further into Afghanistan and Pakistan, which produce no oil at all. One would have to be detached from reality to suppose that American interests in Iraq turn on oil, especially in light of our current policies—and even more to imagine that Islamic fundamentalists would warm up to an America that ceased to have any interest in Middle East oil.

The fact is that large oil revenues are not necessarily correlated with U.S. security concerns, whether nuclear proliferation, support for terrorism, or despotic governance. Iran possesses both oil and a nuclear program. North Korea has a nuclear program but no oil. Libya has oil, but has given up its weapons of mass destruction. Venezuela has oil, but no nuclear program. And Cuba has neither oil nor a nuclear program, but a despotic government.

At the moment, the question of reliance on foreign oil is largely academic in any event. No matter what steps we take today, we will not be able to reduce significantly our reliance on foreign oil for at least a decade. Short of a cataclysmic economic depression which drives demand for oil radically downward, we will remain highly dependent on foreign oil for many years to come. There is nothing wrong with aiming to reduce that dependence, but it is an illusion to suppose that our security interests will change appreciably if we do.

Imposing a massive new tax on energy through a cap and trade program is bad economic policy. Imposing such a tax now, while the economy is struggling through a persistent recession, would be singularly ill-considered. Such a tax would harm U.S. economic security far more than dependence on foreign energy suppliers could possibly hurt us. It is clear that American government officials would be pleased to have a brand new source of tax revenue from cap and trade; but the drag on the economy from higher energy prices would be every bit as severe whether the revenues were sent abroad, paid to the federal government, or incinerated. Fear of potential price increases is simply not a good reason to impose actual price increases on American businesses and the American people.

Fighting a blaze after an explosion on an oil pipeline in Lagos, Nigeria, last year.

AFP PHOTO / STR / NEWSCOM

The economic arguments for cap and trade are nonexistent. The environmental arguments for cap and trade, to be polite, are dubious. None of these arguments is strengthened by a dressed up nativism or far-fetched scenarios masquerading as national security concerns. This is all the more so since, if energy independence were truly our goal, a cap and trade system would be the least sensible way to achieve it. ♦

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The Fawn Patrol

How embarrassing can the 'coverage' get?

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

Richard Wolffe covered the 2008 presidential campaign for *Newsweek*, and he really likes President Obama. No—I mean, he really, *really* likes President Obama. How much? Here's how much: Evan Thomas, a *Newsweek* editor, recently appeared on cable TV and said, "In a way, Obama is standing above the country, above the world—he's sort of God." And Evan Thomas says that Wolffe's coverage of Obama was *too positive*. That's how much.

Renegade
The Making of a President
by Richard Wolffe
Crown, 368 pp., $26

Wolffe reported on Obama's campaign from its frigid beginnings to its pyrotechnic end, and his accounts were so Barackerrific that he earned yips and snarls from all the media watchdogs, especially on the right. As evidence they cited lines he wrote in the Hallmark mode—"On the campaign trail, Obama doesn't seek sympathy; he evokes hope"—and catalogued his appearances as on-air bootblack for the foam-flecked MSNBC host Keith Olbermann.

Wolffe's stuff wasn't just rah-rah: His *Newsweek* stories set a tone. Week to week he laid out definitive versions of story lines that other reporters could hold onto like little life rafts in navigating the churning waters of a long campaign. He informed his colleagues that Obama was a centrist at heart; that the candidate was peeling away legions of disenchanted Republican voters; that Obama's left-wing friends weren't really left-wing—all the half-truths that soon became conventional wisdom, mostly because they made the otherwise disorienting confusion easily understandable for reporters and their editors.

NEWSCOM

Critics who saw Wolffe as a liberal foot soldier for Obama were missing the mark, in my opinion. Like most political reporters, Wolffe in his private opinions is almost certainly a standard-issue liberal Democrat, squish division. Professionally, he's better described as a free-floating propagandist, ready to do service in whatever cause his editors sign him up for. Sports broadcasters call a guy like Wolffe a "homer." He roots for the team he's covering, and will do so faithfully until he's given a clear signal to switch sides. When he was a White House correspondent earlier this decade, with President Bush aloft in the polls, Wolffe's stuff gave off the same warm glow it had when he gazed at Obama three years later.

One story Wolffe wrote to accompany Bush's second inauguration in 2005 carried the headline: "He's hands-on, detail-oriented, and hates 'yes' men. The George Bush you don't know has

Andrew Ferguson, a senior editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD, *is the author, most recently, of* Land of Lincoln: Adventures in Abe's America.

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big dreams—and is racing the clock to realize them." The article added detail to this account of Bush's unbridled virility. "President Bush is by far the biggest agent of change in his own cabinet," Wolffe wrote.

> Whether he's remaking his team or plotting his second-term policies, Bush's leadership style belies his caricature as a disengaged president who is blindly loyal, dislikes dissent, and covets his own downtime. In fact, Bush's aides and friends describe the mirror image of a restless man who masters details and reads avidly. . . .

And so on, each layer thicker than the last.

Eight months later Hurricane Katrina hit, Bush's ratings tanked, and new orders came down. Wolffe now filed his dispatches for stories that declared: "Bush's leadership style and the bureaucratic culture combined to produce a disaster within a disaster. . . . It is not clear what President Bush does read or watch, aside from the occasional biography and an hour or two of ESPN here and there. Bush can be petulant about dissent; he equates disagreement with disloyalty."

Another name for the homer is the courtier, and it's in the courtier spirit—ardent, assured, and completely reversible at the drop of a poll number—that Wolffe has written his new book, *Renegade: The Making of a President*, a soup-to-nuts account of Obama's campaign. The book is closely observed and handsomely written and, what's more, it makes a signal contribution to the literature of contemporary politics, for it presents the case that Washingtonians make to justify their swooning infatuation with their new president. If you want to know why Evan Thomas and his friends are warbling "Nearer My God To Thee," this is the book for you.

The case isn't particularly consistent or convincing. Problems begin with the snappy title. It's taken, Wolffe says, from the code name that the Secret Service bestowed on the candidate, a word that also accurately describes Obama's presence in American politics. Obama is a renegade, Wolffe writes, because he "repeatedly broke the rules." As examples Wolffe lists several tactics—forgoing public financing, spending barrels of money on field work, keeping his tone "mostly positive"—that winning candidates have used many times before. "He plotted to overturn the natural order of the Democratic party," Wolffe insists, notwithstanding the candidate's careful cultivation of labor unions, left-wing activists, shakers of the Washington money tree, multiple generations of Kennedys, and other stalwarts of the party's establishment.

His rendering of the deliberations that led Obama to run for president—an account provided, of course, by Obama's aides and by Obama himself—is a wonderful account of dithering, puffery, and dorm-room deep thinking about 'the meaning of an Obama presidency,' well before there was an Obama presidency to think deeply about.

So he's an odd sort of renegade, as even Wolffe is forced to admit. "He was a cautious and calculating rebel," he writes. "As an outsider," Wolffe goes on, "he owed the establishment little, but chose instead to play by its rules." Though he has a "restless spirit" it made him "yearn for stability." He is "a patient and disciplined renegade." He's a renegade, in other words, who doesn't look, behave, or think like a renegade. Tricky son of a bitch.

It's important to Wolffe and other courtiers to explain the object of their affection in the most extravagant terms they can find—in world-historical terms, if possible. And it is possible! At once shrewd and self-regarding, Obama is of course happy to oblige. Wolffe wants his readers to know that the candidate and his staff offered him "extraordinary access" and dozens of "exclusive" interviews. *Exclusive* here is a hack's term of art: The interviews are exclusive in the sense that Wolffe was the only reporter writing down whatever it was that Obama said in answer to his questions; they're non-exclusive in the sense that Obama told him nothing that he hadn't said a thousand times before.

The demands of the exclusive require Wolffe breathlessly to report bits of news that nobody in his right mind would want to hold his breath for. He offers many unsourced quotations like this one, attributed mysteriously to "one senior aide": "Experience in and of itself isn't bad. In fact, it's very useful in running a government." Or this one, about Obama: "'He's prepared to make painful decisions when necessary,' said one senior aide." No kidding? Did the "senior aide" whisper when he said it? Were they in a darkened garage? My guess is he spoke only on condition of anonymity in hopes that the anonymity would make Wolffe think what he said was worth quoting. It worked.

In such moments Wolffe seems little more than a stenographer among Obama's circle of friends, hopping from lap to lap and filling his pad indiscriminately. But the technique has its uses and, in the end, gives the book its moments of value; sycophancy can be a close cousin to writerly sympathy, and Wolffe has no trouble viewing the world from Obama's point of view.

His rendering of the deliberations that led Obama to run for president—an account provided, of course, by Obama's aides and by Obama himself—is a wonderful account of dithering, puffery, and dorm-room deep thinking about "the meaning of an Obama presidency," well before there was an Obama presidency to think deeply about. Obama's friend Marty Nesbitt tells the would-be candidate that his election "might be the single most influential event since the Emancipation Proclamation."

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"Yeah, it might be," Obama responds ("sipping his bottle of water").

With customary earnestness Wolffe quotes Obama's summary of his own thinking during these months, when the country trembled in expectation:

> What makes a great president [Obama said], as opposed to a great person, is the juxtaposition of that president's personal characteristics and strengths with the needs of the American people and the country. And when you are a president who happens to come into office at that juxtaposition, there's an environment for you to be a great president.

Note that the deliberations turned not on the question of whether Obama was good enough to lead the country—his friends reached quick unanimity on this point—but whether the country was good enough to be led by Obama.

"I came to the conclusion," he told Wolffe, "that the times might be such that I would have to give it a shot." As it turns out, of course, the country passed the test that the candidate set before it. No wonder Mrs. Obama was so proud of us.

It's too early to say whether things are turning out the way Obama and his friends hoped they would. Some predictions already seem a little off. Nesbitt once asked the potential candidate what the response of the Washington establishment—"incumbent politicians"—would be if he were elected.

"Obama savored the thought. 'Well, they'd be quaking in their boots.'"

From what I can tell, most of those incumbent politicians seem remarkably at peace. They seem very happy, in fact—if not quite as happy as Richard Wolffe, Evan Thomas, and other scribes of the court. Whether their Obama rapture lasts depends (as we've seen in Bush's case) on the polls and on perceptions of Obama's success. It could go either way.

Richard Wolffe won't be writing about it in any case, at least not regularly, at least not in *Newsweek*. Since the campaign he's left the magazine and joined a public relations firm. From hack to flack—in Washington it's never so long a leap. ♦

Consequential Ideas

Exploring the subtle dangers of 'soft despotism' in democracies. **BY HARVEY MANSFIELD**

Paul Rahe is a distinguished and prolific historian in the field of intellectual history who ventures with deliberate intent into political philosophy, judging what he sees. His territory is republicanism, ancient and modern, and he shares it with two other historians, also distinguished and prolific, also in political philosophy as well as history, Quentin Skinner and J.G.A. Pocock. These two professors at Cambridge and Johns Hopkins are somewhat better placed, as academics say, than Rahe, a follower of Leo Strauss and a professor at Hillsdale College.

Soft Despotism, Democracy's Drift
Montesquieu, Rousseau, Tocqueville and the Modern Prospect
by Paul A. Rahe
Yale, 400 pp., $38

Rahe's work can be said to be an extended critique of the work of Skinner and Pocock, which has never resulted in a debate among the principals because Skinner and Pocock have never deigned to answer him. The issue between him and them is whether and how ideas influence history. Rahe believes that "ideas have consequences," that they have the power to guide and even make events, and therefore that they are not mainly caused by the conditions of their time or context but are, on the contrary, mainly the cause of these conditions.

In a previous book, *Republics Ancient and Modern* (1992), an impressive work of three volumes loaded with historical fact, philosophical analysis, and bibliography, he argued that republics are fundamentally divided between ancient and modern on the basis of a new, modern idea. This was that a republic can become so perfected through remedies for its weaknesses as to be no longer subject to misfortune, thus perpetual—an idea first propounded by Machiavelli.

Skinner and Pocock, however, in seminal works of theirs (Skinner's *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought* and Pocock's *Machiavellian Moment*), maintain that there is no such distinction between ancient and modern republics, and that republicanism is a theme or set of ideas found useful in various times and contexts, and neither an essential truth nor a project for the future. In their view, often called "historicism," ideas can be traced to prior conditions that are not ideas, such as economic forces or, more particularly for them, political interests. Ideas are essentially defensive; they justify, defend, and protect the established interests of various regimes and of their opponents, for example the defense of the American colonists in the Declaration of Independence.

Ideas cannot cause events because they themselves are caused; so the colonists were not moved to act by the ideas in the Declaration, but those ideas merely expressed what they thought to say after the fact. Ideas are no different from ideology in which you say what you are forced to say in your situation, or your "context," like a defendant speaking through a clever lawyer.

Rahe's book on soft despotism, one of three substantial volumes he is publishing this year, studies a concept of Alexis de Tocqueville's set forth in his magisterial work, *Democracy in America*. Soft despotism (*despotisme doux*), according to him, is a new despotism found only

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in democracy. It is not based on making the people tremble with fear, as Montesquieu said of the usual despot, but on providing benefits and offering good will to the people as individuals.

"It does not break wills; it softens them, bends them, and directs them," says Tocqueville. It even teaches you how to improve your life. But the price of the benefits is to hinder and discourage all political or associational activity in the people, leaving democracy in the condition of a mass of dissociated individuals governed by an "immense being" known today as Big Government. This new democratic despotism, rather than any direct enemy of democracy, is the greatest danger in our democratic age.

Rahe shows the ideas behind Tocqueville's concept from two philosophers who were dear to him. He explains how the ideas of Montesquieu helped to create the "modern republic" of individual commercial interests, and how the ideas of Rousseau countered with a deep critique of the modern republic for its failure to promote citizenship among dissociated individuals and its misunderstanding of liberty as the expression and cultivation of uneasy, divided souls.

Rahe goes beyond this generality in his thorough and accurate elaboration of the subtleties of these two philosophers, each of whom was a great thinker demanding the closest attention, yet also the bestselling author of his portion of the 18th century. If ever ideas have influence, it would seem to be when they are expressed at the highest level and in the same books conveyed directly to the largest multitude.

Yet there are two difficulties that arise from treating Tocqueville as the heir of Montesquieu and Rousseau. The first is in the title of this book that identifies soft despotism as democracy's drift. Drift is unguided, unintentional movement that does not proceed from an idea but rather from inertia or from a slope in the terrain. Tocqueville certainly believes that democratic equality makes society more individualistic and leads to the danger he called "individualism," of which the consequence is likely to be soft despotism.

He calls this movement the "democratic revolution," and says that it began 700 years before, when the Church began to allow commoners to be clergy. That would put its beginning in the 12th century, long before the modern philosophers of democratic equality (among whom he surprisingly includes Descartes).

Tocqueville says further that the democratic revolution is not an idea but a "providential fact," implying that it is too strong to be resisted and also that it might be for our good. As well as tending toward soft despotism, democratic equality produces greater justice than the rival regime of aristocracy. In his discussion Rahe features the role Tocqueville assigned to rationalizing reformers of aristocracy—ministers of the French king such as Cardinal Richelieu and Cardinal Mazarin, the 18th-century *philosophes*, Napoleon's bureaucrats, and in our day professional administrators inspired by the Progressive movement of the early 20th century—all of whom were more opposed to the irrationalities of aristocracy (or patronage) than favorable to democracy.

Alexis de Tocqueville

TIME LIFE PICTURES / GETTY IMAGES

In this trend ideas serve democracy but do not originate it. Yet when democracy comes to America fully visible "in broad daylight," as Tocqueville says, it is in the democratic "idea," both political and religious, that the Puritans brought with them. It seems that, before the Puritans, democracy was working under cover of aristocracy—on its own, as it were—without benefit of advocates who were strong enough to speak openly on its behalf. In this way the democratic "social state" ("state" in the sense of condition), another of Tocqueville's concepts, could be the cause of democratic ideas rather than the reverse.

In sum, Tocqueville plays down, perhaps understates, the role of ideas in causing modern democracy. In *Democracy in America* he does not mention Rousseau, and he mentions Montesquieu only once, to criticize him. In the famous chapter in *The Old Regime and the Revolution* on the "men of letters" who helped to bring on the French Revolution, Rousseau—the most obvious influence—is omitted.

Another related difficulty in making Tocqueville the heir of Montesquieu and Rousseau is that Tocqueville does not appear to be a political philosopher, at least not one of their kind. He does not provide either a comprehensive survey of politics, as did Montesquieu, or an abstract foundation for politics, as did Rousseau. He calls for a "new science of politics," but does not supply it except in apparently unorganized fragments.

Instead, he presents the idea of democratic liberty in an account of the facts of American democracy, above all in the discussion of the New England township with which he begins his presentation of American government. Here one sees the natural, spontaneous association of free men to address a need before their eyes, such as laying a road, that cannot be satisfied by one individual alone. He goes on to describe and praise the complex, artificial, theoretical Constitution that presides over the more spontaneous "civil society" of American democracy. But he never mentions the Declaration whose fundamental principles inspired the Constitution. Rahe notes this fact and deplores it, declaring that his purpose was to instruct Frenchmen, not to "celebrate abstract principles."

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Yet Tocqueville appears to have had an aversion to abstract principles and to have considered them a menace to democratic liberty. In a democracy, abstract principles, including the Declaration's statement that "all men are created equal," will be democratic ones and will accelerate the democratic revolution rather than guide it. Democratic citizens, lacking any sense of hierarchy either in society or in their own souls, are likely to reject demanding ideals and to prefer immediate, material enjoyments that are easy, obvious, and palpable.

They are particularly prone to indulge the doctrines of democratic historians and pantheistic philosophers, which are likely to be systems of materialism. Such systems not only promote material pleasures at the expense of the requirements of political liberty, but also perversely insist that human beings are moved by vast, impersonal causes over which they have little or no control. The ideas most appreciated in democracies—the "course of history," the "theory of evolution," the "laws of economy"—are the very ones most harmful to them.

Although Tocqueville maintains that men need to accept certain "necessary truths" rather than simply doubt there are any higher truths, he believes that the necessary truths are religious ones that, like the "providential fact" of democracy, rescue men from subjection to chance, disorder, and impotence. So he says: "If [man] has no faith, he must serve, and if he is free, he must believe."

The liberals Tocqueville opposes believe that man achieves liberty paradoxically by subjecting himself to his passions; Tocqueville believes that man must accept religion paradoxically for the sake of his power, his pride, and his liberty. He is more a political philosopher than he appears to be, and the reason is that he wants to save democracy from its own favorite bad ideas.

In this he offers testimony to the influence of ideas while avoiding them, and to the power of the democratic context of ideas while resisting it. One could say that he yields some ground to historicism as he decisively rejects it. ♦

It's Probably True

What are the chances of great minds thinking alike?

BY DAVID GUASPARI

When Keith Devlin, a mathematician and skilled popularizer, was invited to write about a world-changing mathematical document, he chose a letter from Blaise Pascal to Pierre de Fermat. Written in 1654, it's part of a famous correspondence usually credited as the birth of the modern notion of probability. That, Devlin says, has "made the world modern" by enabling reasoned predictions about a future that cannot be known with certainty. Probability theory has a massive effect on everyday life—Devlin emphasizes the rational management of risk in, among other things, medicine, engineering, and finance—and requires a new way of thinking about the world.

The Unfinished Game
Pascal, Fermat, and the Seventeenth-Century Letter that Made the World Modern
by Keith Devlin
Basic Books, 208 pp., $24.95

As Ian Hacking stressed in his remarkable book *The Emergence of Probability*, great scientists of the era such as Galileo and Newton accepted an ancient philosophical distinction that sharply divided knowledge from opinion, as things differing not in degree but in kind. Knowledge concerned universal and necessary truths and their demonstratively certain consequences: Newton offered a *proof* that the planets must move in elliptical orbits. Opinions concerned things that could be discussed and debated but not demonstrated (or quantified).

So, Hacking argues, what we call probability was not an object of thought that existed in embryo to become fully developed when some social need or technological opportunity encouraged mathematicians to study it more carefully. Rather, it was something new, born into a world that seemed to have no place for it.

Pascal began the correspondence, it is said, to discuss problems posed to him by a nobleman fond of gambling. The letter that Devlin selected concerns an unsolved puzzle (already old in 1654) called "the problem of points" and seems, at first, a surprising choice since it does not offer Pascal's solution. Rather, it shows Pascal struggling to understand Fermat's and not quite succeeding—even though a modern reader, who has always lived in a mental world saturated with probabilistic thinking, may find Fermat's reasoning straightforward.

The letter provides an occasion to discuss Fermat's solution, illustrates how difficult is the birth of a new idea, and makes good on the book's promise to describe "how mathematics is really done."

The Unfinished Game begins with a leisurely explication of Pascal's letter, interpolating brief biographies of Pascal, Fermat, and other participants in probability's prehistory. Its second half sketches how mathematics that arose in the simple and artificial setting of gambling games—whose underlying mechanisms (coins, dice, cards) are easily understood—was later brought to bear on messy real-world situations in which the underlying mechanisms are quite unknown.

Here is a sample problem of points: Harry and Tom bet on tosses of a fair coin. Harry gets a point for each head,

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Tom for each tail, and the first to reach three wins the pot. If the game is discontinued partway through, how should the pot be split?

Sometimes the answer is obvious: an even split if they quit when the score is tied. But what if Harry leads two to one? The "obvious" case will be misleading if it fixes attention on the current score, but Pascal and Fermat saw past that to the key insight: What matters is not what *has* happened but what *could* happen from now on. They develop that insight in different ways, but with sound arguments.

understanding of Fermat's analysis in terms of four possible futures by trying it on a more complex game in which Tom, Harry, and Dick toss a three-sided coin and play a game to three.

Seven tosses *might* be required, so Pascal only considers futures with all seven. But then he goofs by treating every future with precisely three heads and three tails (and one D) as a tie between Harry and Tom—instead of awarding the pot to whoever reached three first. He recognizes that this gives the wrong answer and

that's fine. This brief essay cannot and does not try to be a "deep" account of the origins of the concept of probability. (For that, try Hacking.)

Independently of Fermat and Pascal, and at roughly the same time, a London merchant named John Graunt published *Natural and Political Observations Made Upon the Bills of Mortality*, addressing what seemed to be problems of a different kind. Without benefit of theory, but with considerable ingenuity, Graunt used London's birth and death records to perform what we would now call statistical inference.

Blaise Pascal

Harry and Tom bet on tosses of a fair coin. Harry gets a point for each head, Tom for each tail, and the first to reach three wins the pot. If the game is discontinued partway through, how should the pot be split?

Pierre de Fermat

Devlin describes Fermat's solution—superior, he says, because it is simpler and reaches the heart of the matter. Consider all the ways the game could continue. The two remaining tosses could play out in four different ways: H-H, H-T, T-H, T-T. Harry wins in the first three, and Tom in the last, so the pot should split 3-to-1 in favor of Harry.

Pascal struggles with the fact that, in practice, the game has just three possible futures (H-H, T-T, T-H) since Harry will win and the game will end if the fourth toss is heads. He tests his

mistakenly concludes that Fermat's method applies only to two-player games. That so fine a mind should make so "obvious" an error shows how hard it was to grasp what Fermat was doing.

It is always illuminating to watch first-rate minds at work, but not obvious how much light Pascal's difficulty throws on the mental revolution needed to grasp what Devlin calls "the very *idea* of predicting the likelihood of future events." So Pascal's letter really serves the author as a rhetorical hook, not an *experimentum cruces*. And

For example, deaths attributed to rickets were first recorded in 1634. Had a new disease emerged, or merely a new diagnosis? Graunt, noting that a condition called "liver-grown" (enlarged liver) was much like rickets, reasoned that if rickets diagnoses simply reclassified what had been identified as "liver-grown," the appearance of deaths attributed to rickets would entail a decrease in deaths attributed to liver-grown. In fact, the mortality reported from liver-grown remained steady; rickets was a new disease.

To get that explanation I went back

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to Graunt's pamphlet. Devlin is an almost unfailingly clear writer, but his summary here was too terse for me to follow. That's understandable. The sweep of mathematical developments to be covered is huge, from the first recognizably modern account of probability (Christiaan Huygens, 1657) to its first mathematically deep results (Jakob Bernoulli's law of large numbers, the first step in putting statistics on a rigorous mathematical footing) to a theory of sampling and measurement error (the bell curve and all that) to the pricing of financial derivatives. And any account must also sketch philosophical terrain that remains hotly contested.

Does probability concern the stable relative frequencies of certain physical events, such as tosses of a coin? (Would that presuppose some physical mechanism, a "propensity," that keeps those frequencies on track? Why do frequencies matter if I'm going to toss a coin—or insure a life—just once?) Or does probability, instead, measure the degree of belief one has, or ought to have, in propositions that may have no statistical nature at all? (Then why does it lead to quantitatively accurate descriptions of the physical world?)

To me—no expert in probability—Devlin's selection seems sound and informative, though his introductory and valedictory rhetoric sometimes overheats. It's a stretch to say that probability theory, which allows us to make rational plans for the future, allows us to "foresee" it. And I dispute the claim that the engineers who build commercial airliners "can calculate with enormous precision the likelihood that a flaw will cause a major crash."

A great deal is known about the reliability of physical devices—rates of manufacturing defects, mean time between failure, etc.—but there exists no quantifiable, scientific account of the reliability of software, which plays an increasing role in the "life-critical" operations of aircraft.

And I'm not sure what to make of the fact that, shortly before September 11, 2001, a system called Site Profiler, built to help military commanders assess terrorist risks, identified the Pentagon as a possible target. That was regarded as interesting, but not taken too seriously. No doubt the program made valid probability calculations about the model it was asked to analyze, but such models are full of guesswork; and without a great deal of evidence for the model's validity, that result should probably be regarded as a fluke.

Devlin acknowledges that but says, without saying enough to convince me, that "from our present perspective . . . the real story is the degree to which the mathematics was able to provide a chillingly accurate assessment of a future risk." ♦

Life, Interrupted

A lyrical voice from the ruins of the Balkans.

BY SAM MUNSON

The critic James Wood, in reviewing Aleksandar Hemon's earlier novel *The Lazarus Project* (2008), wrote of the Bosnian author, and his resettlement in America in the wake of the Balkan wars, that Hemon's writing sometimes reminds him of Nabokov's. (Hemon has said that he learned English by reading Nabokov and underlining the words he didn't recognize.)

Love and Obstacles
by Aleksandar Hemon
Riverhead, 224 pp., $25.95

Yet the feat of his reinvention exceeds the Russian's. Nabokov grew up reading English and was educated at Cambridge. When his American career began, in 1940, he was almost middle-aged, and had long experience in at least three languages.

Hemon, by contrast, tore through his development in the new language with hyperthyroidal speed and has, without question, mastered the English language—indeed, has taught himself such control over it, and achieved such virtuosity in it, that his colleagues in fiction, raised with all the advantages of being native speakers, should feel both uneasy and ashamed at the effortless, balletic achievements of his books.

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Hemon's work demonstrates that a prose rich enough and strange enough to do justice to the perils of art and the bizarre, mysterious, humiliating, and liberating exigencies of life can, indeed, exist in contemporary English, freed of the dragging infelicities exhibited by our more self-consciously "lyrical" writers, brought into being through steely, surgical control, an unstrained, unstinting sense for the absurd, and the application of an utterly remorseless—but utterly fair—eye.

That this unflinching gaze was born out of the author's experience as a refugee from the war in Bosnia, during which he found himself stateless and adrift in America, seems almost self-evident. This severing echoes and colors all of Hemon's work: His protagonists and characters are touched by it directly and indirectly.

The Lazarus Project detailed the search for moral meaning undertaken by the Chicagoan and Bosnian expat Vladimir Brik, who becomes fascinated by the case of Lazarus Averbuch, a young Jewish immigrant shot (for murky reasons) by the Chicago police in 1908. *The Lazarus Project* was widely acclaimed, a finalist for the National Book Award.

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Love and Obstacles, a new collection of short stories, may well suffer from the success of *The Lazarus Project*. Hemon began his career with a collection of stories, and one fears that *Love and Obstracles* may call forth one of book reviewing's most hideous phrases: *a return to form*. The author's reputation, with *The Lazarus Project*, seemed to be poised on the brink of some great and unspecified enlargement. (Despite his having been awarded a MacArthur grant in 2004, his name has not yet achieved the slightly boring ubiquity that goes with real, broad-range, thunderous success in America.) And few things bore literary journalists more than writers—especially foreign writers—failing to act in accordance with some imaginary social heterodoxy.

Happily, whatever its ultimate critical reception, *Love and Obstacles* will stand on its own considerable merits.

Comprising eight stories, it returns again and again to the theme of life dislocated, routine interrupted, existences cut off from their cultural and political roots with varying degrees of severity. These violations of order can be simple, comically banal—a mission to buy a black market deep-freeze, the initiating action of Hemon's story "Everything." They can be as complex and crushing as a violent ethnic war, as in the case of "The Conductor."

The personal, psychological losses incurred Hemon sees as irremediable; death has crept into everything. A traumatized young Serb dies a bizarre semi-accidental death at the end of the nightmarishly funny "Szmura's Room," set in a Chicago exhaling the same spirit-crushing vulgarity that infected Nabokov's Berlin. In the final story, "The Four Noble Truths of Suffering," a banal conversation overheard by a visiting American author at the narrator's dinner table finds its way into his horrifying new novel, a tale of crazed former soldiers and child rapists. Even the freezer purchased by the wretched narrator of "Everything" becomes a white emblem of death, a coffin:

> When the war began in the spring of 1992, and electricity in the city of Sarajevo was cut, everything in the freezer chest thawed, rotted in less than a week, and finally perished.

But Aleksandar Hemon's books are not mere lamentations for innocence and cities ravaged. As terrible as it may sound, these breakages introduce into the lives of Hemon's characters a perverse freedom. The freedom in the case of the adolescent narrator of "Everything" to reimagine himself as an irresistible Byronic lover (although Hemon has severe and lyrically executed humiliations in store for him); the freedom of a young Bosnian living with his parents—low-ranking diplomats in Kinshasa—to explore sex and drugs with the help of another terminally lost émigré in "Stairway to Heaven."

Aleksandar Hemon

NEWSCOM

The comparison to Nabokov is certainly apt, though it is focused on Hemon's powerful prose. But it is true in another connection as well: Hemon, like Nabokov, has mined the miserable and bizarre experience of exile, the sense of helplessness and insignificance it inculcates, with the same virtuosic ability, and come to a philosophical conclusion not entirely dissimilar. Hemon's exiles, like Nabokov's, undergo strange and humiliating torments, but in doing so they enter the extremes of the human condition, aware, aesthetically awake, free. (Though Hemon is never so obvious or disingenuous as to make dreary explicit statements about the soul-enriching properties of pain.)

We see this, perhaps, most clearly in "The Conductor," the most wrenching and horrifying story, where the narrator, an aspiring Bosnian poet, lives in the minor hell of literary jealousy, attending salons at which the renowned Muslim poet Mohammed D. holds court. Hemon's narrator pretends, out of sheer passive-aggression, to be an orchestra conductor after Mohammed wrongly introduces him as such one evening. The aspiring poet obtains a grant and leaves just before the start of war; Mohammed D. stays, still writing, and they lose contact for years, meeting again in Iowa City, where Mohammed has been brought for a conference, and once more in Madison, Wisconsin, where Mohammed has set up a permanent residence.

The older poet is by now a hopeless drunk and wife-beater, albeit still a writer of talents far beyond those our narrator possesses. The story ends with an allusion to Flaubert's *The Legend of St. Julian the Hospitaller*: The narrator and Mohammed embracing in a freezing bed, the narrator holding him until his fear and rage abate enough for the drunken old man to sleep:

> Then I lay down next to him, smelling his sweat and infected gums. . . . He grunted and murmured, until his face calmed. A deep sigh, as when dusk falls, settled in his body. He was a beautiful human being.
>
> And then on Tuesday, last Tuesday, he died.

The sick man, a leper in Flaubert's story, is of course an incarnation of Christ, and he redeems the guilty St. Julian from his grievous sins. Hemon's Mohammed has no divine roots, and he offers no salvation. Only an image of the wreck of a culture, and alongside it, the faintest suggestion that, despite his cruel, recent death, Mohammed's art will live in spite of the mire and evil of the world.

A faint hope. A similar hope can be detected in Nabokov's brightest books, the sort of hope with which we must content ourselves when we survey the last century's long register of catastrophe. ♦

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Food, Glorious Food

A taste of the Federal Writers Project, without additives. **BY ABBY WISSE SCHACHTER**

Corn-fed kid, 1930

RETROFILE / GETTY IMAGES

Imagine a recent meeting at a major publishing house.

"I have a new book idea," says an author.

"Let's hear it," replies his editor.

"It's an anthology," the author explains.

"Oh, no," mumbles the editor.

"I found these dusty old boxes just filled to the brim with selections from a government-run book project from 1941!" exclaims the writer.

"Dear God, no," moans the editor.

"And best of all," the author presses on, "these clips have never before seen the light of day!"

Hardly sounds like blockbuster material. But when you are the best-selling author Mark Kurlansky, the man who gave us *Cod* and *Salt*, book contracts are a little easier to come by. And so we have his latest offering, *The Food of a Younger Land*.

Thank you, Mr. Kurlansky, and kudos to your wise editor, because rescuing this material was a good deed.

While researching another book on food writing at the Library of Congress, Kurlansky uncovered a treasure trove of material for a planned book entitled *America Eats*. The materials were collected as part of the Federal Writers Project under Franklin Roosevelt's Works Progress Administration. The FWP was set up to give jobs to writers, journalists, poets, and any other Tom, Dick, or Hemingway who was unemployed during the Depression.

The FWP "was charged," Kurlansky writes, "with conceiving books, assigning them to huge unwieldy teams of out-of-work and want-to-be writers around the country, and editing and publishing them."

The Food of a Younger Land
A Portrait of American Food—Before the National Highway System, Before Chain Restaurants, and Before Frozen Food, When the Nation's Food Was Seasonal
by Mark Kurlansky
Riverhead, 416 pp., $27.95

America Eats was supposed to be "a book about the varied food and eating traditions throughout America, an examination of what and how Americans ate." And what a cornucopia of food and traditions it was. There are entries on Maine chowder, a Georgia oyster roast; a Washington smelt fry, a California grunion fry, and a behind-the-scenes look at Skipper Ben Wenberg, the man who invented Lobster Newburg.

There are recipes for Long Island rabbit stew known as Hasenpfeffer, Mississippi barbeque sauce, Indiana pork cake, Virginia hot bread, and Rhode Island jonny cakes (including how they got their name). There is even some poetry, like this offering from "Nebraskans Eat Weiners":

We believe that if Napoleon
In retreating from the cold
Could have had Nebraska hot dogs
He would have made it to the fold.

The section on Vermont foods includes a recipe for pickled butternuts that closes with the directive to "cover

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tightly and keep for a year before using." Imagine such a recipe appearing in a cookbook today! Talk about slow food.

And from the entry on Coca-Cola parties in the Peach State, we get this:

> The dining table is decorated like any tea-table with flowers, fruits or mints, except that there are little buckets of ice so that guests may replenish their glasses as the ice melts. Other bottled drinks are usually provided for those who don't like Coca-cola, but these are few in Georgia.

Where possible, Kurlansky has included contributions from well-known writers. In "Mississippi," Eudora Welty writes, "Generosity has touched the art of cooking, and now and then, it is said, a Southern lady will give another Southern lady her favorite recipe and even include all the ingredients down to that magical little touch that makes all the difference." Entries by lesser-known names, like the one signed "Grandma Smith, Route 1, Gulfport, Mississippi," are equally worthwhile, however.

As much as this book is about food, drinks make their presence known as well. The description of a "Fish Fry on the Levee, Mississippi" has this gem: "Cheap whiskey, locally known as 'stoop-down,' brings about twenty five cents for a short half-pint; 'two-block' wine is a little cheaper but just as potent since you can't drink it and walk more than two blocks." From Kenneth Roberts's description of Maine-style Hot Buttered Rum we learn that it was traditional to "place a barrel of hard cider in the barnyard and allow it to freeze; the remaining liquor that is drained off is applejack, a remarkably powerful fluid." But we also get a stern warning: "Of course, there are legal technicalities covering mere possession of such un-taxed beverages."

The description of a New York literary tea is wonderful, especially for those connected to the business of books: "The place must always be jammed, seemingly no literary tea is successful unless it is crowded enough to make an exchange of intellectual ideas an impossibility. . . . 'Heavy' conversation is invariably frowned upon and *chichi* wit is at a premium."

Jerry Felsheim, the author of the entry, continues: "The uninitiate gravitates toward the author, the author toward the editor or publisher, the publisher toward the reviewer, and the reviewer, in desperation, toward another drink." Ah, to live in a world where reviewers are such objects of desire!

Whereas an earlier FWP effort, a series of American state and city guidebooks, was hugely successful (and can still be found today), *America Eats* was not.

First, as Stetson Kennedy put it, "Washington kept cooking up these sidelines. *America Eats* was one of those sidelines." There was also the shame of writing on the dole. Kurlansky loves the concept of government "supporting" the arts, and especially writers, by giving them all jobs. And given the country's current economic difficulties and the poor state of newspapers, the author seems almost to wish that a similar sort of effort could be attempted today.

But he has to admit that, in practice, the Federal Writers Project didn't work for the people it was set up to help. Lots of participating writers were dropping out of the program by 1940 because they "didn't like working for the government and felt there was a stigma to writing for a welfare check," Kurlansky confesses. "They left whenever they had another opportunity." (The fact that contributors to FWP projects didn't get their names published with their work also probably didn't sit well with the scribblers.)

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and America's entry into World War II effectively shut down the project before it was ever published.

The book's only major failing is that Kurlansky, who has earned his merit badge as a researcher for uncovering, sorting, and publishing this collection, can't keep himself from editorializing. He seems to feel that these pieces should serve as a morality tale: Look how great and diverse American food was seven decades ago, he claims; today it's all Taco Bell and McDonald's.

"It is terrifying," he writes, "to see how much we have lost in only 70 years." Later Kurlansky avers that Midwest "cuisine has been ravaged by fast food." And then there is this comment he made in a recent interview: "It's scary when you read through this and see all of these common things that are really scarce now. Abalone, salmon, flying squirrels—not that I want to eat one, but they should be hopping around."

I hate to burst Kurlansky's bubble, but while it may be true that certain traditions, like squirrel stew, have become rare, American food is more impressive and more diverse today than ever before. Why, just recently, *Bon Appétit* was beating the drum for American fare in its May issue, entitled "The Best of the U.S.A.," which included all sorts of contemporary local dishes from coast to coast.

Beyond disparaging the quality and diversity of food in America today, Kurlansky beats the drum for global warming whenever he can. Worse still, he seems to get it wrong: In his introduction to a section on Vermont sugaring-off, he writes that "since the 1970s, the winter temperature in America's sugar maple zone has risen between two and three degrees on average and the syruping season now begins five weeks earlier than it did at the time of *America Eats*."

Except that the text that follows says this:

> The average four week season is from about the middle of March to mid-April, but it has been known to start as early as February 22, or as late as the first week in April. Depending on the weather sugar-making may extend as long as six weeks, or last only two.

Apparently the length of the season, and when it begins, has been fluctuating a lot longer than the current panic about the earth's temperature. Kurlansky should have kept his archivist hat on, stepped back, and let the pieces stand, deliciously, on their own. ♦

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Comedy Tonight?

From Allen to Paar to Carson to Leno to just another show. **BY ELI LEHRER**

Conan O'Brien, the new host of *The Tonight Show*, is funny, witty, and possesses the sort of affable geekiness that makes him seem approachable. In its first weeks, his new version of *Tonight*—airing live-to-tape from a gorgeous purpose-built neo-art deco studio on Los Angeles's Universal lot—has contained more than its share of comic gems. And even though the show runs on fourth-place NBC, it has turned in decent ratings numbers for advertisers. Financially and artistically, in short, the show will probably work out well. But with O'Brien at the helm, *The Tonight Show* appears ready to end its run as a touchstone of American popular culture and take its place as—well, just another entertainment program.

The Tonight Show, which has produced more episodes than any entertainment program in American television history, defined an entire genre in the way few programs ever have. Although only a few million people watch it, the show gets lots of attention in high places: In a well-done skit taped with news reader Brian Williams, Barack Obama welcomed O'Brien to the show while promising not to bail out the show if it bombs. (The bit ends with Obama's slightly creepy grin.)

Obama had good political cause to do this because, after all, just about every American has seen the show at some point, and few can bring themselves to hate it. It's safe. The most watched program in its time slot for all but two of its years on the air, its four prior hosts—Steve Allen, Jack Paar, Johnny Carson, and Jay Leno—were all well-known comics specializing in pointed, mostly nonpolitical, humor. While Steve Allen did become politically engaged later in life—his quirky views led him to attack belief in God, "dirty" television, almost all conservatives, and most popular culture created after 1955—the show itself rarely managed to permanently offend anyone.

O'Brien is cut from different cloth. While all previous hosts had some degree of personal celebrity outside the late-night talk show business, O'Brien's time in the public eye has *all* been as a talk show host. He has never done a standup comedy tour, played a professional dramatic role beyond a cameo, or appeared in a commercially released movie. He found himself vaulted from a variety of respected (but hardly fame-creating) writing gigs on *Saturday Night Live*, *The Simpsons*, and a variety of sketch comedy troupes when, in 1993, Lorne Michaels picked him as David Letterman's replacement on NBC's *Late Night*. His run attracted plenty of derision in its first year, and NBC kept him on a week-to-week contract. But he eventually gained an audience made up of the young people advertisers pay extra to reach.

Even after 16 years on the air, O'Brien hasn't emerged as a great stand-up comic. His nervousness while telling jokes, although endearing at times, makes him seem amateurish. He really excels where he started: in sketch comedy that's heavy on writing, visual humor, and zaniness, but not so reliant on comic timing. A few inspired bits—a meteor coming out of nowhere to hit guest Tom Hanks and a long sequence with O'Brien hijacking a tram tour of the Universal lot—required plenty of writing and acting talent but little of the natural comic timing that Leno and Carson brought to the show.

No *Tonight* host has ever been great at interviews and O'Brien is no exception. O'Brien is much more comfortable doing sketch comedy with guests than talking with them. And sketches are where O'Brien works best: Early in his career, he wrote *Saturday Night Live*'s infamous "Nude Beach" sketch where the word "penis" was repeated over 40 times in five minutes. But he does more than just anatomical jokes. As chief writer for *The Simpsons* he wrote the smart, literate, funny episode—"Marge vs. the Monorail"—that's arguably the show's best episode ever. The best bits of comedy on *Late Night* involved his in-jokey, postmodern looks at life "In the Year 2000," which continued well beyond the actual year 2000, and on up to a so-so retread ("In the Year 3000") during his first week on *Tonight.*

All of this works on its own terms, but like nearly all sketch comedy, the confines of a short sketch can get old, tired, even offensive. Despite a few brilliant sight gags, a pre-filmed sketch built around a visit to Universal's sound stage fell flat and ran on too long, as did a bit about Julia Louis-Dreyfus stealing an Oscar from the cafeteria. No matter how good the writing—and O'Brien's can be very good—sketch comedy just isn't going to have the appeal of the standup routines that have dominated *The Tonight Show.* A good standup comedian can always recover from a bad joke; a bad sketch just gets irritating.

In some respects, the Conan O'Brien version shows promise. His show is wonderful-looking, funny, fun, and well-written. His humor, on balance, is more sophisticated than Carson's or Leno's. But on a fourth-place network, a sketch comedy-based late-night show probably won't keep its place as a cultural touchstone. *The Tonight Show* under Conan O'Brien is good and will probably succeed. But it's just another TV show. ♦

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Formula 123

Gritty subways, cowering hostages, and Denzel Washington, too. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

"What the hell did they expect for their lousy 35 cents? To live forever?"

So says a disgruntled New York City bureaucrat annoyed at having to work too hard on a day when some hijackers have taken over a Lexington Avenue subway car and are threatening the passengers.

The Taking of Pelham 123
Directed by Tony Scott

This line is one of several dozen glorious bits of New York dialogue emanating from an unexpectedly great screenplay. Its author was the late Peter Stone, a Broadway playwright who brought astonishing zing to a throwaway urban thriller with a television director named Joseph Sargent at the helm and a cast of New York actors serving under Walter Matthau, then the most unlikely and most wonderful star of his or any other time.

The movie is 1974's *The Taking of Pelham 123*, and even though the word "unpretentious" could have been coined to describe it, the thing has legs. As many of the more prestigious movies of the decade have faded—*Coming Home*, anyone? *Julia*, perhaps? *The Deer Hunter*, people?—the reputation of *The Taking of Pelham 123* has grown. It is, in its way, perfect. The movie emerges from a hot summer day in New York; Matthau is a New York transit cop named Garber showing a bunch of Japanese subway officials around the shabby command center, which looks low-tech even for 1974.

Meanwhile, four men who call each other Mr. Green, Mr. Blue, Mr. Grey, and Mr. Brown board a subway at Grand Central, take control of the first car, detach it from the rest of the train, and use the train radio to demand a ransom of (cue the Dr. Evil imitation) one million dollars.

The mayor, sick at home in Gracie Mansion with a wicked cold, swears like a sailor and whines like a child ("this city doesn't *have* a million dollars!"). Incompetent cops crash their car when driving the ransom money to the tunnel. Garber stews. His colleagues at Subway Central bellyache ("we had a bomb scare in Brooklyn yesterday, but it turned out to be a cantaloupe") and some passengers die. A sneeze, of all things, helps complete the plot.

The director had almost free run of the subway system, for which the producers paid a small fee of $25,000 to the Metropolitan Transit Authority. After its release, when officials realized they had cooperated with a movie depicting a ransom scheme for a few bucks, they mostly ended the practice of licensing the system to Hollywood, and now all subway movies are filmed in an abandoned station in Brooklyn.

As a result, never before or since have the New York subways been depicted so vividly. And since the movie was made at a moment of low ebb, with stations and subway cars alike all grimy, ugly, ill-kept, and riddled with graffiti, the movie functions as a look back at the world's greatest city when it seemed as though it was sliding into the decline that Detroit has instead suffered.

Mostly, though, what makes *The Taking of Pelham 123* so wonderful are the words Peter Stone put into his characters' mouths. They are all New York City ethnics, white and black and Puerto Rican, and Stone takes complete advantage of the city's informal, blustery, large-hearted style of kibitzing, wisecracking, and playful putting-down. Netflix it, or better yet, go out and buy it.

I'm telling you all this because *The Taking of Pelham 123*, which was more than a B movie but a little less than an A movie, has now been remade with Denzel Washington in the Walter Matthau role and John Travolta as the head criminal (a part originally played by Robert Shaw, the magnificent villain who was also the shark hunter in *Jaws*). It turns out to be surprisingly watchable; I say surprisingly because the director is Tony Scott, an overcooker of a melodramatist who never saw a straightforward storyline he wouldn't gussy up with excessive camera moves and hyperactive bloodletting. But Washington is very, very good and Travolta is unpredictable and frightening, and there are good crashes and explosions, and James Gandolfini is in it too, so who could complain?

The new movie demonstrates that the essential plot—a subway train held hostage and the cat-and-mouse game between the authorities and the hostage-takers—is so strong that it has now carried the day for two enjoyable movies 35 years apart. The plot is the work of a hack writer named Morton Freedgood, who wrote a novel with the same title under the pen name John Godey.

Peter Stone could have come up with a great joke about that. But if Tony Scott and Brian Helgeland, the screenwriter of the sequel, have ever even heard of a joke, you wouldn't know it from this movie, which is about as light-spirited as a documentary about Darfur orphans. The terrific tonal shifts in the original, from funny to heart-pounding in about a second, have no parallel in the undeniably propulsive and exciting new film, which is so intense that, by the end, its intensity gets a little monotonous.

Not bad. Just not *as* good. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"Four Guantánamo Bay detainees, ethnic Uighurs from China, have been released and resettled in Bermuda, U.S. officials said Thursday."
—Associated Press, *June 11, 2009*

Parody

A NOTE FROM THE PREMIER OF BERMUDA

Hello, friend.

That's right, the moment you step ashore our island paradise, you are our friend. Whether you come from Europe, the Americas, or Western Xinjiang Province, consider yourself at home in Bermuda. Stroll our trademark pink sand, frolic in our turquoise waters, play a round of golf or two, imbibe in a Dark & Stormy cocktail if your faith permits you to consume alcohol. Savor the freshest seafood and international cuisine, including Central Asian-Middle Eastern fusion. And meet the people of Bermuda, some of whom have had family here for centuries, others who are a bit more recently arrived—yes, I am referring to our four new Uighur friends. (But only four—this isn't Palau, for heaven's sake.) No matter who you are or what's your story (and lately I've heard some really interesting ones!), you'll feel right at home in Bermuda.

Ewart

Dr. the Hon. Ewart F. Brown, JP, MP
Premier and Minister of Tourism and Transport

QUO FATA FERUNT

the weekly Standard
June 22, 2009

TOP LEFT PHOTO: NEWSCOM

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